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Anthony Eden, Appeaser of the Soviets?

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

By

Mark Anthony Turner
B.S., Earlham College, 1996

2012
Wright State University

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

June 9, 2012

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION
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ABSTRACT

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Anthony Eden, Appeaser of the Soviets?

In late May 1942, while the Soviet Union staggered from catastrophic defeats at Kharkov and in the Crimea, British and Soviet representatives met in London and signed a treaty of mutual assistance that would lay the basis for the Grand Alliance. This thesis, based on the newly discovered material from Stalin's secret archives, argues that Anthony Eden, British Foreign Minister, far from the weak-willed appeaser caricatured by subsequent historians, was a shrewd, yet principled diplomat, who assessed the Soviets far more realistically than did his British counterparts. Moreover, Eden was a skilled and resourceful negotiator who drove a very hard bargain, and although the Soviets ultimately did achieve acceptance of their frontiers in Eastern Europe, they did this by force of arms and not with Eden's connivance. Any failures the British and Americans experienced in protecting Eastern Europe were failures that occurred later in the war. In the end, if the British appeased Stalin it resulted from their much weaker position in relation to the Soviets in 1944 and 1945, not because Eden took a soft line with the Soviets in May 1942. In May of 1942 Eden accomplished the goal set for him

by the British and the Americans; he successfully upheld the principles of the Atlantic Charter while signing a treaty of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union.

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Anthony Eden, Appeaser of the Soviets?

Introduction

In late May 1942, while the Soviet Union staggered from catastrophic defeats at Kharkov and in the Crimea, British and Soviet representatives met in London and signed a treaty of mutual assistance that would lay the basis for the Grand Alliance.

Negotiations for the treaty had begun in December 1941 with the mission to Moscow of Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary. There, negotiations stalled because of Stalin's demand that Great Britain recognize Soviet borders as they existed prior to the German invasion in June 1941. Although Stalin had then agreed to postpone resolution of the Soviet-Polish border question until the end of the war, British acceptance of the other borders would mean nothing less than recognition of the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), Bessarabia, and parts of Finland.¹

Despite this temporary setback, Eden was convinced of the absolute necessity of a treaty with the Soviet Union, and returned to London determined to convince the British War cabinet to accept Stalin's demands (except for the question of Polish frontiers).² In this, he was ultimately successful, but his apparent readiness to sanction Soviet expansion in exchange for a mutual aid treaty left him vulnerable to charges of having appeased the Soviets. Even Eden's colleague Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Undersecretary at the

¹ Anthony Eden, Memoirs: The Reckoning (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 370-372.

² Ibid., 369-370.

Foreign Office, believed that Eden was willing to “crawl to the Russians over the dead bodies of all our (British) principles.”³ Subsequent historians have relied heavily on Cadogan’s diaries, and although some, like Martin Kitchen, have sought a balanced view,⁴ Steven Miner, author of the most recent and comprehensive study of the Anglo-Soviet treaty of 1942, writes that “it is difficult to distinguish any difference between Eden’s misguided efforts to transform Stalinist Russia into a satiated power and the better-known appeasement of Hitler before the war.”⁵

Miner argues that Eden was willing to abandon the promises Great Britain made to the world in the Atlantic Charter as well as breaking ranks with its Atlantic Charter partner, the United States, for his own unfounded beliefs. Miner further argues that Eden had no guarantee of Soviet cooperation in exchange for British assent to Soviet demands, and the historical evidence proves that the Soviets would view the British concessions as a sign of weakness, not as a symbol of good faith.

Miner cites the Soviet negotiations with Germany, their treatment of Sir Stafford Cripps, and the demands made to the British at the Moscow conference as evidence that Stalin implacably pursued the goal of acquiring as much land as possible. According to Miner, Cripps was treated rudely and often ignored, sometimes for months at a time, while he served as the British Ambassador to the Soviet Union in Moscow.⁶ Stalin’s goal, Miner claims, had been altered only when the military situation dictated that he had

³ Sir Alexander Cadogan, The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945, ed. David Dilks (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1972), 448.

⁴ Martin Kitchen, British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War (New York: St.Martin’s Press, 1986), 274. “British policy makers did their best in an exceedingly difficult situation and it would be both foolish and unjust to condemn them for blindly appeasing an implacable enemy.”

⁵ Steven Miner, Between Churchill and Stalin: The Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the Origins of the Grand Alliance (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 199-201.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 264.

no choice, as in May 1942.⁷ Miner faults the British, Eden in particular, for either being unable or unwilling to recognize that the Russians needed the British more than the British needed the Russians.⁸ In Miner's opinion, the results demonstrated that the British blindly appeased the Soviets in an all-out attempt to destroy the Nazi menace while the Soviets skillfully maintained their interest for post-war Europe.⁹

Other studies critical of Eden include Sir Llewellyn Woodward and David Carlton. Woodward was a historian of British foreign policy in World War II and his view that Eden advocated appeasement was based on Cadogan's diaries. Woodward argues that in the 1942 negotiations, the British should have known from their 1939 negotiations with the Russians that a surrender of principle was useless. He believed that Eden did espouse a surrender of British principle that only encouraged further Soviet demands.¹⁰

David Carlton, an Eden biographer, also critical of Eden's negotiations, felt that had the military situation in the Soviet Union not been so desperate in May 1942, Molotov would have undoubtedly pressed the issue of frontiers. Carlton argued that Eden had been soft on the Soviets in his negotiations allowing them to believe the British would concede to their demands in the future when the Soviets were in a better position to negotiate. In conclusion, he stated that the Soviets had no choice but to agree to the treaty *sans* frontiers and focus on Molotov's visit to the United States to discuss the possibility of opening a second front.¹¹

⁷ Ibid., 258-260.

⁸ Ibid., 253.

⁹ Ibid., 260-262.

¹⁰ Sir Llewellyn Woodward, British Foreign Policy in the Second World War (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1962), 245.

¹¹ David Carlton, Anthony Eden: A Biography (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1981) 199.

Many historians have accepted Cadogan's writings about the negotiations as absolute truth however this view ignores Cadogan's own hatred and mistrust of the Soviets. Cadogan also misunderstood the difficulties Eden faced, which is why his opinion remained consistent during a period when Eden and Churchill's opinions fluctuated, while forced to negotiate a treaty agreeable to the British, the Soviets, the Americans, and other European countries like Poland. Moreover, Cadogan seemed to fear that Eden would be far weaker in the negotiations with the Russians than he proved to be.¹²

It is important to note that many historians writing on the career of Anthony Eden have portrayed him as a failure. Eden was an intelligent, good looking, young politician who never seemed to live up to his promise. He studied at Eton until September 1915 when he volunteered for the army. Subsequently Eden became one of the youngest adjutants in the war, was awarded the Military Cross for rescuing his sergeant, and became the youngest brigade major in the army. After the war Eden went to Christ Church, Oxford to read for a degree in Oriental Languages focusing in Persian and Turkish.

Eden's political career began at the age of twenty-six when he was elected MP for Warwick and Leamington. Seven years later Eden entered the Foreign Office and in 1935, at the age of thirty-eight, he became the youngest Foreign Secretary since 1851.¹³ On 20 February 1938 Eden resigned over differences in opinion with the Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and the appeasement of Hitler. Churchill wrote that Eden "seemed

¹² Cadogan, 418-448.

¹³ Carlton, 12-13, 70.

to me at this time to embody the life-hope of the British nation.”¹⁴ What happened to tarnish the hope that so many people saw in Eden? Much of Eden’s “failure” seems to stem from the fact that his time as Prime Minister coincided with Great Britain’s decline as the major world power. Another factor contributing to many of these historians’ view is the portrayal of Eden as an appeaser of the Soviet Union and the sense that he helped to create a cold war world that he could not manage. Thus, many historians have developed their arguments by working backward from the Suez and Eden’s failed government in 1956 through his years of Foreign Secretary often overlooking his achievements.

Cadogan’s constant doubt of Eden only helped to reinforce this image of him as failing Britain. Therefore, along with The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, I have used other, more balanced, sources including: Winston Churchill’s The Hinge of Fate, Ivan Maisky’s Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador, and Eden’s The Reckoning. Churchill, like Cadogan, was privy to Eden’s private thoughts on certain aspects of this treaty, but, unlike Cadogan, was not with Eden in Moscow. As Great Britain’s Prime Minister he did, however, work very closely with Eden on the negotiations from December 1941 through May 1942, and was often at odds with Eden on what line should be taken in the negotiations.

Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain, traveled with Eden to Moscow for the meetings with Stalin. The time Maisky had spent in London gave him an understanding of Eden and his intentions since he had been named Foreign Secretary. As a Soviet diplomat, Maisky’s account sheds light on certain aspects of the negotiations that remain ambiguous in the British accounts. For example, Maisky informs Molotov on his train ride to London that there is little chance of the Soviet proposals being accepted by

¹⁴ Cited in Robert Rhodes James. Anthony Eden, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987), 195.

the British.¹⁵ In fact, Maisky had already told Stalin that pressing the British for recognition of the Soviet Union's 1941 frontiers was hopeless when he learned that Stalin intended to do just that at the Moscow meetings.

Finally Eden's book, while it includes only edited entries of his original notes, is able to convey his thoughts and feelings during this time period. These three sources offer a prospective of the negotiations often overlooked in Cadogan's diary. Specifically, they offer an appreciation for some of the more difficult aspects that Eden faced and Cadogan, at times, seemed to misunderstand.

This thesis, based on the newly discovered material from Stalin's secret archives, argues that Eden, far from the weak-willed appeaser caricatured in Miner's book, was a shrewd, yet principled diplomat, who assessed the Soviets far more realistically than did Cadogan or even Churchill. Moreover, as we shall see from Molotov's record of the treaty negotiations, Eden was a skilled and resourceful negotiator who drove a very hard bargain, and although the Soviets ultimately did achieve acceptance of their frontiers in Eastern Europe, they did this by force of arms and not with Eden's connivance.

The primary source used for this argument is Oleg Rzheshesky's War and Diplomacy: The Making of the Grand Alliance. This newly published book containing documents from Stalin's secret archives gives detailed Soviet accounts of the December 1941 Moscow meetings as well as the May 1942 London meetings. Eden's negotiating prowess is detailed in Molotov's telegrams to Stalin, and confirms that Eden would not settle for any treaty inconsistent with British and American wishes.

Rzheshesky focuses on the actual negotiations, not the months between, thus, the account is based on what was said and done while disregarding the personal bias that

¹⁵ Ivan Maisky, Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968) 260-265.

often comes through in Cadogan's diaries. The juxtaposition offered by Rzhesheshevsky strongly suggests that historians have over-emphasized Cadogan's writings in their analysis of the Anglo-Soviet treaty.

Chapter I:

British Foreign Policy Towards the Soviet Union, June to December 1941

The months from June through December 1941 were very important to the British during World War II; rather than facing the Germans alone, they saw both the Soviet Union and the United States brought into the war. Nevertheless, Eden knew that he faced many obstacles when he traveled to Moscow in December 1941.¹⁶

Eden's primary concern was that despite the Red Army's success in halting the German offensive before Moscow, there was as yet no formal treaty linking the British and Soviet war efforts. Moreover, the supplies being shipped to Britain and Russia via the Lend-Lease Act were in jeopardy because of American entry into the war. The United States level of war production at this time was yet not high enough to supply the British, the Soviets, and US together. The problem was also complicated by questions of whether America would actively participate in the German effort or focus their military strength in the Pacific. Certainly the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor was emotional enough to encourage the Americans to concentrate their war effort in the Pacific Theater. All of these questions weighed on Eden as he embarked on his journey to Moscow in early December.

The Soviets demanded a second front, material aid, British troops, and a political treaty, but the limitations imposed upon the British were tight and unfortunately often misunderstood by the Soviets. This was exacerbated by initial British fears that the Red

¹⁶ Eden, 313-340.

Army would last at best no more than three to six weeks against the German *Blitzkrieg*.

The British underestimated the Soviet military so much that Cadogan was relieved to write three days after the invasion that the Red Army had not yet been defeated.¹⁷

Adding to the confusion of the British foreign policy regarding the Soviets was a concern whether Great Britain could or should even enter into a political treaty with a communist Soviet Union; a country with whom they had unsuccessfully attempted to negotiate a neutrality pact with in 1939 and 1940. Additional issues also increased the burden on the British Government. How could the British continue to honor their alliance with Poland while reaching a political agreement with the Soviets? After all, it was the invasion of Poland in September 1939, which the Soviet Union took part in, which prompted the British to declare war on Nazi Germany thus beginning World War II. This was no small matter.

What options did this leave the British in their hope of obtaining an agreement, at least militarily and economically, with the Russians? Churchill's radio address on 22 June 1941, the night of the invasion, clearly shows that the British did indeed want an agreement with the Soviets.¹⁸ While an alliance with the Soviets was awkward and problematic, it was also necessary, and such an alliance would have to be strong enough to withstand the inevitable strains attendant on any wartime military alliance. For the British, the first step had been a joint declaration with the Soviets on 12 July 1941

¹⁷ Bradley Smith, Sharing Secrets with Stalin: How the Allies Traded Intelligence, 1941-1945 (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996), 21.

¹⁸ Winston S Churchill, "The Fourth Climacteric," The Unrelenting Struggle, vol. 2 of The War Speeches of the Rt. Hon. Winston S. Churchill C.H., M.P., compiled by Charles Eade (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1942), 169-174.

rendering mutual assistance and agreeing to not sign a separate peace treaty with Hitlerite Germany.¹⁹

The British accompanied this initial agreement 16 August 1941 when they extended the Soviets ten million pounds credit to support their war effort. The British and Soviets, along with the Americans, took one more step towards solidifying their partnership during a conference held in Moscow on 29 September to 1 October 1941. This was the first time the three powers had met to establish methods to aid the Soviets in their plight against the Germans.²⁰ The British took these steps to lend economic support while avoiding a political treaty and any mention of frontiers that would cause problems with Poland, other European countries, or the United States. Ultimately, this was the foundation that allowed the British to pursue a closer relationship with the Soviets.

The British may not have been willing to enter into a political agreement with the Soviets at this time but they had no such reservations in their relationship with the Americans. In August of 1941 Churchill signed the Atlantic Charter with the President of the United States Franklin Roosevelt. Depending on how the Atlantic Charter was interpreted, one could easily see it as a way of limiting Britain's options in negotiations with the Soviets. Based on broad principles for governing the Anglo-American alliance several aspects of the Atlantic Charter would prove sticking points in negotiations with the Soviets:

Second, they (the United States and Great Britain) desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.

¹⁹ Woodward, 152-153.

²⁰ Oleg Rzheshevsky, War and Diplomacy: The Making of the Grand Alliance (Amsterdam: Hardwood Academic Publishers, 1996), 4.

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see the sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.²¹

These two principles were controversial because the Soviets had officially made the Baltic States part of the Soviet Union in their constitution after they had been annexed. They claimed that the Baltic States had showed their desire to become part of the Soviet Union through legally administered plebiscites.²² Therefore, Stalin stated that he would adhere to the principles of the Atlantic Charter believing the Soviets could not be questioned about the territory gained through their collaboration with Germany. Thus, from the Soviet point of view, any territorial disputes involving them would be relegated to after the German invasion 22 June 1941. Eden argued that the British had used the Atlantic Charter to deny Polish attempts to reconfigure its border with Estonia prior to the introduction of Stalin's minimal concessions involving Russia's 1941 borders.²³

The British War Cabinet hoped Eden would be able to come to terms with the Soviets in matters of military concern, especially anything that would help them get a better understanding of the Soviets actual military power, position, and plans for future action. The British would also welcome a deal that would enable them to better understand the economic strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Union. This would allow the British and Americans to concentrate their assistance in areas of particular need. Eden, however, had no authority to sign a treaty but merely a declaration that could later be ratified and signed in London. Any agreement Eden made with Stalin

²¹ Winston S. Churchill, The Grand Alliance, vol. 3 of The Second World War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 443.

²² The second meeting in Moscow, 17 December 1941, Published in Oleg Rzeshevsky's War and Diplomacy, 30. Hereafter all meetings are cited as meeting, date, War and Diplomacy, and page number.

²³ Ross, Graham, Editor. The Foreign Office and the Kremlin: British Documents on Anglo-Soviet Relations, (New York, 1984), 85-87.

would be subject to the approval of Churchill, the House of Commons, the Dominions, and would then be passed on to the Americans.²⁴ This allowed Eden a legitimate excuse for putting off any political questions Stalin could raise.

This flexibility proved a very important option for Eden. With the United States now in the war, the British no longer had to worry about fighting the Japanese alone, and thus did not unconditionally need Soviet help in the Pacific. Also the British could not be bullied by the Soviet argument that they alone were sustaining the Allied military effort, an argument that had facilitated Stalin's demands for recognition of their 1941 frontiers and/or the opening of a second front throughout the second half of 1941.²⁵

The British were optimistic when Eden set sail for the conference in Moscow. It was 8 December 1941, the Americans were now in the war and Eden felt it was only a matter of time before the war would be won.²⁶ Eden was cautiously optimistic about the conference in Moscow; he noted that the war aims laid out by Stalin on 6 November 1941 were in line with the principles of the Atlantic Charter:

We have not and cannot have such war aims as the seizure of foreign territory, the subjugation of foreign peoples, whether it concerns the peoples and territories of Europe, or the peoples and territories of Asia, including Persia. Our first aim consists of liberating our territories and our peoples from the fascist yoke.

We have not, and we cannot have, such war aims as the forcing of our will and our regime upon the Slavonic or any other enslaved peoples of Europe who are expecting our assistance. Our aim consists in helping these people in their struggle for liberation against Hitlerite tyranny, and later permitting them fairly to settle their own destiny in their own land. No interference in the internal affairs of other people.²⁷

²⁴ Eden, 336-338 and 344-345.

²⁵ The second meeting in Moscow, 17 December 1941, War and Diplomacy, 30.

²⁶ Eden, 331.

²⁷ Woodward, 220-221.

Stalin dashed any hope Eden had of avoiding the frontier issue in their first meeting. Stalin not only related his desire for the Soviet frontier but also unveiled a plan for each country in post-war Europe to be included in a secret protocol.²⁸ Eden was shocked by the thoroughness of Stalin's secret protocol. German soldiers were close enough to Moscow to see the Kremlin, yet Stalin was laying out his vision for post-war Europe knowing that the British, backed by the Americans and the Atlantic Charter, would be dead set against this plan. Asking Eden to accept this, against the advice of Maisky, was clearly a sign of Stalin's confidence and posed great difficulty in the negotiations.²⁹

Eden was able, despite constant harassment, to convince Stalin that any discussions beyond the limitations of their two countries would have to include the United States at a later date.³⁰ Stalin was willing to concede this, but insisted that the Soviet Union's western frontier was not negotiable; indeed, at the second meeting the western frontier became a "minimal concession." Eden's only recourse to this situation was a consistent denial in having any authority to deal with such a matter at the meetings in Moscow and a reassurance that he would consult Churchill, the War Cabinet, and the United States when he returned to London.³¹ Eden, in his attempt to get an agreement signed, began to question Stalin as to why he could not sign a treaty at this time that made no mention of Soviet frontiers. Eden assured him that this would not in any way hinder the Soviet Union's claim to their western frontier, and would be an important step to building the Anglo-Soviet relationship. Stalin, however, was intractable.

²⁸ Eden, 335.

²⁹ Maisky, 231-232.

³⁰ Felix Chuev, *Molotov Remembers: Inside Kremlin Politics* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1993), 48. Molotov discusses how Stalin, believing Eden to be weak constantly harassed him about not having the authority to sign an agreement at the 1941 Moscow meetings.

³¹ The second meeting in Moscow, 17 December 1941, *War and Diplomacy*, 30-34.

Eden endured more of the same in the third meeting with Stalin but the fourth meeting proved to be friendlier. Stalin started to understand Eden's position and was not chastising him personally, and he also put off the question of the Russo-Polish border. This was in fact a very large concession considering it left 800 km of the Russian border undecided.³² Eden again promised Stalin that he would relay the Soviet concerns when he returned home. The fourth meeting ended with a dinner and a party that lasted until 5:30 the next morning. Considering that nothing was signed, the negotiations ended on a positive note.

Eden telegraphed Churchill after the final meeting, giving the Prime Minister his interpretation of the visit, stating that he felt it had been "worth while" and at least some of Stalin's suspicions had been quelled. However, Stalin had made it clear that he specifically wanted to sign a treaty and not merely an agreement of some sort. Eden also told Churchill that no agreement could be reached without the recognition of the Soviet Union's western frontier.³³ Cadogan supports Eden's claim by writing in his diary that it was "pretty clear Russians won't sign treaties if we don't recognise their 1941 frontiers."³⁴ On 22 December Eden began the trip home from Moscow with his main goal still intact: he believed that the meetings had been an important first step to closer Anglo-Soviet relations.

³² Molotov's talks with Eden 22 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 82.

³³ Eden, 351-352.

³⁴ Cadogan, 422.

Chapter II: Eden's Attitudes Towards the Soviet Demands from the Moscow Meetings to the London Meetings

The months between December 1941 and May 1942 were fraught with hard work and varied opinions in London. In his memoirs Eden noted that, from January 1942 to the end of the war, his chief concern was the political aspects of Britain's relationship with her allies.³⁵ Eden dealt most directly with the Soviets during the treaty talks and it was up to him to spearhead the British desire to get a treaty signed. Thus, the state of Anglo-Soviet relations was squarely placed on Eden's shoulders from his return in December until the treaty was signed on 26 May 1942. Understanding Eden's attitude throughout this period is thus critical to comprehending why the treaty talks proceeded as they did, since he was in control of the British response.

On 28 January Eden wrote a memorandum stating his position on the major stumbling block of the Moscow meetings, the Soviet demand for British acceptance of their 1941 pre-invasion frontiers. Stalin promised that this did not include the Polish frontier. Eden had been able to get Stalin to agree to postpone that at the Moscow meetings. This memorandum therefore dealt with the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States, which were currently part of the Soviet Union according to the Soviet Constitution.

³⁵ Eden, 367.

Eden's memorandum assumed eventual defeat of Germany, and focused on the fact that post-war Europe would see not only the defeated Axis powers but also a prolonged period of French weakness. Eden's position was that:

Russia's position will be unassailable. Russian prestige will be so great that the establishment of Communist Governments in the majority of European countries will be greatly facilitated, and the Soviet Government will naturally be tempted to work for this.³⁶

Eden later stated that he sensed there was "growing evidence of Soviet power that we (Great Britain) would have to face after the war."³⁷ In other words, he assumed that responsibility for maintaining the post-war peace of Europe would rest solely in the hands of Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Why did Eden not include the United States as a post-war European policeman? Eden felt that while it was obvious and inevitable that sooner or later the United States would eclipse the British in world prestige, this had not yet happened in January 1942. Additionally, the Americans had taken a staunch isolationist policy following World War I and while the Americans had supplied the British and the Soviets, they had not physically entered the war until attacked. Eden was against basing his policy on the Americans, and saw an Anglo-Soviet treaty as a way to limit the Soviet Union in the power vacuum of post-war Europe. At the very least, Eden wanted to secure Russian cooperation with the British in post-war Europe.

In addition to this, Eden faced the difficult task of reconciling the vast difference in the principles espoused by the Soviet Union and the United States; whether the Americans signed the treaty or not, they would have influence over some aspects of the final agreement.

³⁶ Ibid., 370.

³⁷ Ibid., 367-368.

As Eden pointed out in his memorandum of 28 January, there would be inevitable problems in obtaining day-to-day cooperation with both the Americans and the Russians. He went on to say that “Soviet policy is amoral” while the “United States is exaggeratedly moral, at least where non-American interests are concerned.”³⁸ The Soviets believed they were entitled to demand recognition of their borders, and honestly felt they were making a huge concession to British wishes in leaving the Polish-Soviet border open for later debate. The Americans, referring to the Atlantic Charter, were staunchly against recognizing any borders before the end of the war.

It is important to fully understand the differences in opinion between Eden, and eventually Churchill, to that of United States Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Under Secretary, Sumner Welles; Hull had foremost influence regarding this matter with President Roosevelt and thus in forming U.S. policy. Upon returning from Moscow Eden allowed his papers and notes of the conference in Moscow to be reviewed by John Winant, the American Ambassador to Great Britain, which he passed on to Secretary of State Hull in Washington. Hull, who consistently defended the principles of the Atlantic Charter from Eden’s meeting in Moscow until the agreement was signed in late May 1942, was horrified, although not surprised, by Stalin pushing Eden for recognition of the Soviet borders as a “minimal concession”. Hull’s response to Winant stated that Roosevelt would fully support the Soviets right to security at the end of the war, but the Atlantic Charter, which Stalin had publicly agreed to adhere to, prohibited these types of agreements during the war.³⁹ To Hull the Americans were now involved in the war because they had upheld the principles of the Atlantic Charter by denying the Japanese

³⁸ Ibid., 370.

³⁹ Cordell Hull, The Memiors of Cordell Hull, vol. 2 (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1948), 1165-1170.

similar territorial concessions in Asia; the Americans would show their support and dedication to the Soviets through Lend-Lease supplies, not acquiescing to specific territorial demands.⁴⁰ This was a point of view that Americans such as Hull and Roosevelt could hold fast to in Washington while the situation as it existed in London for Eden and Churchill was vastly different.

Averell Harriman, who acted as special envoy for Franklin Roosevelt and worked closely with both Churchill and Stalin, disagreed with Hull's assessment of the situation. Harriman was in London and understood the delicate nature of the situation from the British perspective. Public opinion in Britain was increasing pressure on Churchill, and to a lesser extent Eden, to provide support to the Soviets in the war with Germany. A survey administered shortly after the Germany attack on Russia found 49% of those polled believed Britain had "not taken" advantage of the opportunity while only 29% believed the British "had taken" advantage of the German attack.⁴¹ Thus the public perception that prevailed in London, as well as in Moscow, was one of the Soviets primarily standing alone in their resistance of the *Werhmacht* onslaught. Therefore like Eden, Harriman believed that nothing would be gained with Soviets and perhaps much lost if the British and Americans flatly refused to discuss Stalin's territorial demands. Hull absolutely refused to acknowledge any Soviet claims pertaining to borders, despite Harriman's arguments that the Red Army could push far beyond these borders as the war progressed; leaving the United States and Great Britain to deal with a powerful Soviet Union stretched far beyond its current borders, full of animosity towards their allies

⁴⁰ W. Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946, (New York: Random House, 1975), 110-111, 135.

⁴¹ Cited in Kitchen, 100.

rather than a Soviet Union willing to work with trustworthy allies based on past negotiations.⁴²

Harriman's support for Eden was tempered by yet a second reason for the American resistance as illustrated in Harry Hopkins' view of the situation. Hopkins, another of Roosevelt's special envoys who spent time in London, was close to Roosevelt and in a position to influence the President's decisions, told Polish ambassador Jan Ciechanowski that he felt Stalin's main aim was to acquire maximum material aid rather than seek territorial aggrandizement. At the same time, Hopkins believed, like Eden, that the Allies needed to coordinate their war efforts and the Soviet Union needed to be included. He went on to tell Ambassador Winant that he felt the post-war world could not be organized without the Russians sharing an equal partnership with both the Americans and the British.⁴³

Eden, in an attempt to reconcile the conflicting viewpoints, thought the British should be willing to compromise on their position concerning the Soviet frontiers. Eden contended that this compromise would be a sign of goodwill worthy of building Soviet trust. He also felt that the American opposition could be countered in a number of ways. First, Eden, like Harriman, argued that a victory by the allies would leave the Red Army far deeper in Europe than the boundaries Stalin was proposing at this time. By acquiescing on the frontier issue, Eden believed he could tie the Russians to certain boundaries that would be impossible for the Americans and British to prevent anyway. This, Eden estimated, would restrict the Soviets power of influence in post-war Europe or at least force the Soviets to consider the British viewpoint. Eden clearly wanted Anglo-

⁴² Harriman and Abel, 110.

⁴³ Dwight William Tuttle, Harry L. Hopkins and Anglo-American-Soviet Relations, 1941-1945 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983), 141.

Soviet cooperation, but if the Soviets refused to take into account the British viewpoint, Eden believed that he could use this against the Soviets by showing the British had acted in good faith while the Soviets had broken their promises.

This argument was clearly aimed at the position of President Roosevelt and Cordell Hull, who felt that there was no reason to consider the Baltic question in the early months of 1942, or until the end of the war, because the security of the Baltic States depended on a strong Soviet Army. Like Eden, Roosevelt did not believe that the Soviets could be forced out of the Baltic States if they reoccupied them. However, Roosevelt believed that the decision of the Baltic States should remain open until the post-war conference at which time they would be recognized as Soviet territory. Roosevelt expected the same result as Eden, but he wanted to wait until the end of the war to make it official. Eden felt Roosevelt's approach would only upset Stalin and in the end the Soviets would end up with the same territory but the Western Allies would receive no cooperation in the war effort in return.⁴⁴ Moreover, Eden believed this approach to the issue would anger Stalin to the point that Eden would not be able to salvage any type of meaningful post-war relationship between their two countries. The worst case scenario could eventually provoke another war if the Soviets sought to exploit a weakened Europe.

Eden may have been correct in assuming that a flat denial of Stalin's "minimal concessions" at this time would have almost certainly ended any chance of post-war collaboration, along with closer relations between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies. In any case, Stalin made it clear that he did not believe any outside country could deny them of a territory that existed in their constitution.⁴⁵ At this time, the Red Army

⁴⁴ Eden, 370-376.

⁴⁵ The second meeting in Moscow, 17 December 1941, War and Diplomacy, 28-32.

was engaged in a counteroffensive pushing the German Army away from Moscow, and Stalin was full of confidence. While Stalin was able to accept a brief postponement of this question, he certainly would not have accepted the British telling him that he needed to wait for the post-war conference before his western boundary would be decided. Eden believed, and rightly so, that a rejection of the territorial demands would raise Stalin's suspicions at a time when he was paranoid about any alliance with the western powers, perhaps due to the failure of the Nazi-Soviet Neutrality Pact.

According to Steven Miner, containment was not Eden's primary reason for considering Stalin's demands. In a message that Eden wrote to Lord Halifax, British Ambassador to the United States, on 10 March, which Miner claims exposed Eden's real reason for advocating the acceptance of Stalin's demands, Eden stated:

We regard it of the highest importance at this stage of the war to leave nothing undone which would enable us to get into real contact with Stalin, to exchange ideas with him freely on all subjects connected with the conduct of the war.⁴⁶

Eden, in Miner's opinion, thought he could forge a closer relationship between the two countries. Of course this would not be possible if the British and Americans issued a denial to Stalin on his territorial demands. Thus, according to Miner, Eden's actual objective was not the containment of a communist Soviet Union but, first and foremost, closer relations with the Soviet Union.

Miner offers additional evidence in support of this argument pointing out the influence of Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador to the Soviet Union, as a factor to Eden's attitude. Miner cites memoranda of 5 and 28 January 1942 in which Eden twice stated that he believed Stalin understood the question of Russia's frontier to be "the

⁴⁶ Anthony Eden quoted in Miner, Between Churchill and Stalin, 215.

acid test” in which they could judge British intentions.⁴⁷ In other words, there could be no real cooperation with the Soviets unless the British were willing to sacrifice something of importance, and Eden felt cooperation worth this type of initial sacrifice, especially since it could reward the British with substantial long term dividends.

There were a number of reasons why Eden was more than willing to follow the same line of thinking as Cripps. As noted earlier, Eden was convinced that a victory by the Allies would leave the Red Army far deeper in Europe than the Baltic frontier. By tying the Soviets to that frontier, the British and Americans might gain a friendly Soviet Union able to control Germany if it was needed, rather than unfriendly Soviet Union willing to fill the power vacuum left by the destruction of Germany and France.⁴⁸ Thus, Eden proposed what he believed was the best way realistically possible to gain some influence over the decisions made in Russia, namely as an ally.

Furthermore, Sir Stafford Cripps, who served as the British Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1940-1942, had been working to convince Eden that the Russians would open up to the British as soon as they proved trustworthy. The only way to do this, according to Cripps, was to defer to the Russians position that the Baltic States were constitutionally part of the Soviet Union. This is where Eden got the idea that the frontier issue was Stalin’s “acid test.”⁴⁹ Miner is quick to portray Cripps as a person who is extremely emotional towards the Soviets, constantly changing his feelings, and therefore his advice on a situation in a moment’s notice.⁵⁰ He also states that Cripps was often ignored for months at a time while he was working as the British Ambassador to the

⁴⁷ Miner, 194-198.

⁴⁸ Eden, 370.

⁴⁹ “War Cabinet: Policy Towards Russia; Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,” January 28, 1942, quoted in Miner Between Churchill and Stalin, 198-199.

⁵⁰ Miner, 97.

Soviet Union. Miner is correct, but Cripps was often ignored only in periods when the British were not actively seeking any type of agreement with the Soviets. As far as Cripps' emotional involvement in the months leading to the December meetings, he always came back to his position that Stalin would be happy to engage in closer relations with the British based on some initial show of trust by the British. Moreover, Cripps worked more closely with the Soviets than anyone else in the Foreign Office, and it was therefore natural for Eden to attach more weight to Cripps than to Cadogan, who was clearly anti-Soviet.

Cripps' point of view became even more enticing to Eden once he saw the widespread popularity Cripps enjoyed after his return from Moscow. Eden, who had post-war political aspirations for the position of Prime Minister, realized that if he could mend the Anglo-Soviet relationship, he might also win over British public opinion. Eden wrote to Halifax on 26 February 1942, suggesting that future disagreements between the Allied powers be handled by tripartite discussions consisting of himself, John Winant, the American Ambassador to Britain, and Ivan Maisky, the Russian Ambassador to Britain. In this scenario Eden hoped to dominate the other two, controlling negotiations with the Russians and effectively excluding the Americans. Miner claims this plan would have ensured Eden experience and hero status, which might have carried through to the post-war period.⁵¹

There is no doubt that British public opinion greatly supported the Red Army in their defense of Russia. This support only increased as the treaty talks moved towards the month of May and with each successive military failure by the British and the Americans. Likewise, there is also little doubt that Eden did have visions of becoming

⁵¹ Ibid., 204-205.

Prime Minister after the war. In addition to this, Eden was leery of Cripps' public support and the possibility Cripps could move up the political ladder by passing Eden. At the same time, Miner's view that Eden sought to repair the Anglo-Soviet relationship for his personal political goals is a gross exaggeration. Churchill himself switched his position on the frontier issue based on British public opinion concerning military defeats, and Eden followed the same course he started on with his return from Moscow but only until early May.

At this time, however, there was no guarantee that the Red Army would hold out against the Germans. As spring crept closer it became obvious to Churchill, through interception of German military messages, that the Germans were planning another huge summer offensive and, while a separate peace was unlikely, Hitler and Stalin had both proved to be unpredictable. In a speech Stalin gave to the Red Army on 23 February, he differentiated between Hitlerite Germany and the German nation that would remain after Hitler was gone.⁵² Although the British War Cabinet took note of this thinly veiled threat, they believed that it was nothing more than that.⁵³ If, however, the Soviets made a separate peace with Germany it would be much more likely in long drawn-out stalemate which could not be ruled out on the Eastern Front. Cadogan also confirmed British fears when he noted that the Soviets had the freedom to completely change their policy when it suited them without losing any respect in making the about-face.⁵⁴

Making matters worse, the British experienced disastrous military reverses in the first five months of 1942. The British Army, along with the Army of the Dominions, had suffered embarrassing defeats in Malaya, in Burma, and in Singapore where 80,000

⁵² Woodward, 192.

⁵³ Miner, 211.

⁵⁴ Cadogan, 455.

British soldiers surrendered to 30,000 Japanese after Churchill had given the order to fight to the last man. The United States fared little better than the British at Guam, Wake Island, and the Philippines. The overall military situation for the Western Allies was discouraging to say the least.⁵⁵ The military defeats were exacerbated by losses in Allied Convoys, which continued to increase at an alarming rate through the first half of 1942.

In addition to these defeats, the Soviet Union was facing much more of the German onslaught than Great Britain and the United States combined. The only place the British were directly confronting the Germans was in Libya where Rommel broke down the British offensive and eventually pushed towards the Suez Canal with his own counteroffensive. The fact that the Russians were taking the brunt of the German *Wehrmacht* would become more problematic, especially for the British, once the Russians began to increase their demands for a second front in Europe. Churchill adamantly denied the possibility of opening a second front in Europe in 1942. Therefore, he began to waver on his formerly uncompromising position in relation to the Atlantic Charter and Stalin's frontier demands. Early in 1942, Churchill had repeatedly denounced Russia's demands for recognition of her 1941 borders, and had insisted that there could be no discussion of these borders before a peace conference, but British military failures had clearly forced him to reconsider his position by 7 March, when he wrote to Roosevelt that...⁵⁶

The increasing gravity of the war has led me to feel that the principles of the Atlantic Charter ought not to be construed so as to deny to Russia the frontiers she occupied when Germany attacked her. This was the basis on which Russia acceded to the Charter.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Tuttle, 138.

⁵⁶ Churchill, *Grand Alliance*, 695-696.

⁵⁷ Winston S. Churchill. *The Hinge of Fate*, vol. 4 of *The Second World War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 327.

Churchill went on to ask the President to accept Britain's request to sign the treaty, therefore acknowledging the Soviet Union's 1941 pre-invasion frontiers. He admitted that the British would be unable to help Russia when Germany renewed the offensive in the spring, and that the Red Army was the only force heavily engaged with the Germans.

The British situation in March of 1942 was indeed gloomy, at best, and Churchill, who did not believe that the British, the Americans, or both, could mount a successful cross-channel invasion of Western Europe in 1942, turned to what he saw as the next best option. Churchill, much like Eden, had correctly surmised that at this time the treaty with the Soviets was important enough to bend the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Churchill had taken much of the criticism for the military failures during these desolate months, and Parliament was even seeking an investigation as to why the British had surrendered at Singapore. Thus, as the military situation worsened, Churchill had very little choice but to agree with Eden.

Due to British military problems, Churchill's views fluctuated from February to May. Churchill felt the Atlantic Charter espoused certain democratic principles that he could not easily disregard, and believed that Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia should be free sovereign states. By acquiescing to Stalin's claims that they were constitutionally part of the Soviet Union, he would thus be subjecting free people to foreign rule. Churchill also questioned the "legal" plebiscites that transferred control of the Baltic States to the Soviet Union. This, in Churchill's opinion, was an action that if not checked could be used by the Soviets in the future for territorial acquisitions. Eden believed that these "democratic principles" Churchill and Roosevelt attempted to preserve were unrealistic considering

both Churchill and Roosevelt knew the Soviets could not be turned out of the Baltic States once the Red Army reached them. Therefore, Churchill and Roosevelt were willing to accede to that frontier at the end of the war but would not initially recognize it unless they could gain some benefits by compromising on this issue.⁵⁸

However, Churchill's political situation deteriorated as Britain's military fortunes worsened. Churchill, facing a British public that was increasingly sympathetic towards the Soviet Union, assumed that there was nothing the British could do to help their Russian Allies and chose to give his consent to sign the Anglo-Soviet Treaty acknowledging the Soviet Union's western frontier *sans* Poland.⁵⁹ Churchill had to worry about political matters, especially since in England the Prime Minister is not guaranteed a full term, and losing a vote of confidence leads to another election. Even the House of Commons was growing impatient with Churchill. This was only remedied after Churchill gave an hour and fifty-minute speech to Parliament in which he outlined Britain's limited military options at the time.⁶⁰ However, as Eden astutely noted, the vote of confidence given the government on 29 January did not wash away criticism of the British war effort or the nation's discontent.⁶¹ Despite the critical public opinion and people like Cripps who publicly advocated more British support for the Soviet war effort, Churchill remained wary of Stalin's demands.⁶²

Nevertheless, in the winter months of 1942, Churchill drew closer to Eden's position regarding the Russians. Given the difficult circumstances it was easier for Churchill to concede over the Baltic States, than offer a second front, since the latter was

⁵⁸ Eden, 372-376.

⁵⁹ David Dilks quoted in Cadogan, 439.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 429.

⁶¹ Eden, 372.

⁶² Cited in Miner, 203.

impossible in 1942.⁶³ Indeed, it was highly unlikely that they could open an effective second front even in 1943 and Churchill was prepared to sacrifice some of his principles in order to get a treaty with the Soviet Union.

Churchill sent a message to Stalin on the 9 of March informing him that he, Churchill, had asked the President for approval of the British recognition of the controversial territorial questions, thereby, giving the British free rein to sign the treaty the Soviets wished to sign. Again, on 20 March, Churchill sent a telegram to Stalin stating that Lord Beaverbrook was in Washington attempting to explain the British position and work out any differences in the Anglo-American perspective that might act as a road block to the Anglo-Soviet negotiations.⁶⁴

These two telegrams serve as clear evidence that Churchill not only had adopted Eden's point of view but that Churchill wanted the British and the Soviets to sign this treaty as soon as possible. Churchill was always close to Roosevelt and the Americans but he is unexpectedly completely candid in these messages to Stalin, which underlines the grave position Churchill found himself in March of 1942. Churchill might have been shifting the blame to the Americans for Britain's slow reaction to Stalin's demands; he could have been buying time. However, Churchill also put himself in a bad situation. He not only put a lot of pressure on the United States, which explains how bad the situation was for Churchill, but he also ran the risk of upsetting the Americans. At this time, the relationship between the United States and Britain was strained and getting worse. The military defeats, questions of future military operations, and this frontier issue were all part of the declining Anglo-American relations in the first few months of 1942.

⁶³ Molotov's meeting with Churchill, 22 May 1942, *War and Diplomacy*, 92-93.

⁶⁴ Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 328-329.

At this point it is important to understand how the American leadership viewed Russia's Western frontiers, since it was only American support that could insure Churchill's principles. In the memorandum dated 21 January 1942, Eden had envisioned the difficulty he would have in reconciling the differences between the principles of the United States and the Soviet Union. A key factor in Eden's point of view was his belief that the Americans would soften their "unrealistic" position. According to Eden, the Americans remained suspicious of Russia, especially because of her pact with Hitler, and her attack on Finland in 1939. However, given the worsening situation in the Far East, Eden believed that the Americans would focus on securing the best possible way to defeat Hitler, which, Eden believed, was through closer relations with the Soviets to make the war effort more efficient and check German power, should it rise again after the war.

Eden's solution to these problems was to coordinate British policy with both American and Soviet aims. This would mean that the British would have to consult the Americans in all phases of their treaty talks with the Soviets. The British had to eventually get the Americans to approve of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty or agree to allow the British to sign a treaty without the Americans' denunciation. Of course, from the British perspective, the best possible situation would be tripartite agreement on all consultations yet Eden was not naïve enough to expect, or even attempt, to reach a tripartite agreement at this time.⁶⁵

Miner argues that Eden turned his back on the Americans as soon as they rejected his proposal to accept Stalin's demands.⁶⁶ This, however, goes too far. While Eden

⁶⁵ Ibid., 370-371.

⁶⁶ Miner, 220-222.

knew that the British alone must ultimately sign it or reject the proposed treaty with the Soviet Union, Eden also knew that American support was essential to its ultimate success. Therefore, he worked for a solution acceptable to both Roosevelt and Stalin. Mending the rift that had developed between the United States and Britain over this issue was, however, extremely difficult, given the radically different attitudes of British and American public opinion. Eden was walking a narrow tightrope between the United States and the Soviet Union while still attempting to remain true to his own beliefs, beliefs that resembled those of the British public more closely than Churchill's.

Eden suggested two alternative methods to solve this problem in case the Americans could not be brought around on the issue of the frontiers. The first alternative was for both the British and Americans to support Stalin's demands for Soviet bases in border countries that were on the Baltic and Black Seas. Depending on what Stalin was willing to accept, this could be put off until the end of the war or, if Stalin would not accept that, it could be put into the treaty to help get it signed. Secondly, based on the advice of Lord Halifax, Eden would promote an Anglo-American endorsement of Soviet control of the Baltic States' defense and foreign policy. Even though Halifax assumed the Americans would not like this, he felt they would probably accept it as the best possible solution to a difficult situation. Halifax and Eden agreed it was highly unlikely that the Soviets would accept anything less.⁶⁷ These were the options Eden took to the War Cabinet meeting on 6 February.

Miner argues that Churchill was able to convince the members present at this meeting to send Roosevelt a copy of Stalin's demands. The cabinet also provided the President with a British evaluation of the pros and cons of accepting these demands.

⁶⁷ Eden, 370-371.

According to Miner, the rift that had developed between Churchill and Eden over the frontier issue was healed by Churchill's promise to abide by Roosevelt's decision, believing that he would also reject Stalin's demands. Miner believes this was agreeable to Eden because Eden thought he would be able to convince the Americans of the necessity for recognizing Russia's 1941 frontiers.

The problem is, could Eden have realistically rejected Churchill's request to submit Stalin's demands to Roosevelt? It would have been highly unlikely if not impossible. According to Miner, Eden's choice to advance the War Cabinet's plan is a sign that Eden thought he had won the argument and the United States would soon follow his reasoning.⁶⁸ However, Eden mentioned in his memoirs that he believed the United States needed to be informed of the process if not directly involved.⁶⁹ Churchill's request was far too reasonable for Eden to ignore or oppose even if he had not wanted to inform the Americans of the present state of the talks. Eden did not stand to gain anything by opposing Churchill's request except for provoking Churchill, who still maintained his opposition to Stalin's demands.

It is more likely, however, that Eden's decision was based not on a belief that the Americans would immediately accept his argument but rather on the realistic assumption that Churchill would consult the President whether Eden agreed to it or not. The support of the United States was, even at this early stage of the war, far too essential to leave them in the dark over the Anglo-Soviet Treaty. It is thus unlikely that Eden even considered the possibility of withholding information about the treaty talks from the Americans. Cadogan apparently believed that Eden agreed with Churchill because Eden

⁶⁸ Miner, 205-206.

⁶⁹ Eden, 371.

thought the Americans would support him, but Eden knew that if the British had to accept one Allied partner and reject the other, they had no choice but to accept the United States and reject the Soviets. Therefore, Eden could not disapprove of involving the Americans, since it would be too costly in the future.

Roosevelt, as Cadogan had predicted, proved an unwilling accomplice to what he believed was a violation of the Atlantic Charter. Cadogan expressed his view of the matter in no uncertain terms:

(The) Americans are sticky about it- quite rightly. How funny A. (Eden) is! Because it fits in with his trip, he is quite prepared to throw to the winds all principles (Atlantic Charter) which he has not drafted. This amoral, realpolitik line was never his. We shall make a mistake if we press the Americans to depart from principles, and a howler if we do it without them.⁷⁰

This was precisely the difficulty Eden wanted to avoid: the Americans did not agree with him and now, having already consulted them, he could not reject their point of view without risking major conflict between the Western Allies. At the same time, Eden could not have expected to carry on the negotiations without some input from the Americans. Eden was in an extremely difficult position with no options satisfactory to all three parties involved.

The American reaction officially relayed to Eden by Halifax on 20 February did not change throughout the course of the negotiations. Halifax told Eden that Roosevelt did not like either of the alternatives he had suggested since they did not adhere to Roosevelt's interpretation of the principles of the Atlantic Charter. Roosevelt also believed that it was too early in the war for a detailed attempt to solve the frontier issue.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Cadogan, 437.

⁷¹ Miner, 208.

This is the same line that Cadogan would continue to argue in opposition to Eden and, eventually, Churchill.

Roosevelt, rather than argue his point to the British, decided to go directly to Stalin. Roosevelt did not feel that American public opinion would support an Anglo-Soviet agreement that recognized Soviet boundaries (especially with the Baltic States) at this early stage of the war. He also believed he could “handle” Stalin by persuading him to forego territorial negotiations in favor of opening a second front. Roosevelt’s fear that the British would be weak in their negotiations with the Soviets led him to write Churchill that:

I think I can personally handle Stalin better than either your Foreign Office or my State Department. Stalin hates the guts of all your top people. He thinks he likes me better, and I hope he will continue to do so.⁷²

This was the point at which Eden did get upset with the Americans. He called this maneuver: “the first of several occasions when the President, mistakenly I believe, moved out of step with us, influenced by his conviction that he could get better results with Stalin direct than could the three countries negotiating together.”⁷³ Eden took this as an insult. He had met with Stalin and he, along with Cadogan, left with the impression that no deal could be signed without British recognition of the Soviet Union’s 1941 frontier. Eden was not promoting acceptance of Stalin’s demands to avoid negotiating a better deal, but rather because Eden did not think a better deal was possible: this was the only way to get the deal done. The longer it took for the British to work out a deal with the Soviets, the longer the British Government had to contend with a dissatisfied public

⁷² Letter from Roosevelt to Churchill 18 March 1942 as cited in Warren F. Kimbrall, Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence, vol. 1 Alliance Emerging (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 421.

⁷³ Eden, 375.

as well as suspicious Stalin. Roosevelt did not seem to understand this, and it upset Eden. More important than Eden's hurt feelings was the fact that he seemed to be dangerously close to losing control of the situation. He needed some help to keep all his work from unraveling before his eyes. If the Americans were able to step in and take control, the British might lose a vital opportunity to better their relations with the Russians, which could be detrimental to any post-war cooperation.

On top of the problems Eden was having with the Americans, he began to have trouble with Maisky. Eden believed Maisky attempted to put pressure on the British Government by explaining to journalists that the British were refusing to respond to Stalin's demands as well as exaggerating their inability to make a decision without the approval of the Americans. Moreover, he told the press that the Soviets would not work with the British on military matters until the Russian western frontier had been decided. Although Eden was not surprised by the use of these tactics, they did begin to wear on his nerves, especially since the British public opinion was becoming more supportive of the Soviets and more critical of Churchill's government. The one bright spot was that the War Cabinet had reached a consensus by the end of March.

Cadogan's diaries for late March help to clarify how the War Cabinet, including Churchill, resolved their differences of opinion. On the 23 of March Cadogan wrote that Maisky had told Eden the Soviets had replied to Roosevelt's communication and were now ready to go forward in the negotiations with the British based on Britain's acceptance of the 1941 frontiers.⁷⁴ Eden must have been overjoyed by the Russian response for it put the ball firmly back in his court. He had not wanted Roosevelt to go over his head in the first place for fear of ruining what might have been the only chance

⁷⁴ Cadogan, 442.

to truly improve Anglo-Soviet relations. Maisky also reiterated that they had not approached the United States therefore the Soviet Union did not feel it was necessary for them to reply any further to Roosevelt's telegram. The pressure the British were feeling from the United States would now be relieved, to a certain extent, because the Americans would have to go through the British to have their views on the treaty heard.

Eden had regained the power to negotiate, but the Russians were more than willing to lend Roosevelt an ear when he began talking about the possibility of opening a second front. This became another obstacle to Eden's negotiations since the British, Churchill in particular, regarded this as an impossibility in 1942 and highly unlikely in 1943. On the other hand, the Americans' push for a second front in 1942 did help to wipe out within a week the remaining opposition in the War Cabinet to Eden's position towards Stalin's demands.⁷⁵

Cadogan's diary continued with a step-by-step account of the War Cabinet's decision to attempt to sign a treaty with the Soviets. The next day, 24 March, Cadogan described the meeting and, as usual, provided his own analysis of the situation. He noted that of the War Cabinet members, he alone stood in opposition to Eden. Based on Roosevelt's unwillingness to accept Stalin's minimal concessions, Cadogan believed it would be foolish for the Cabinet to accept Stalin's demands.⁷⁶ It is important to remember as well that Churchill had already told Stalin, on 9 March, that he was trying to bring Roosevelt around to the British understanding of the frontier issue. This meant that Churchill no longer believed that the Atlantic Charter should be interpreted in a way that would keep the Allies from recognizing the Soviets' western frontier, except in relation to

⁷⁵ Eden, 376-377.

⁷⁶ Cadogan, 443.

Poland. David Dilks, the editor of Cadogan's diaries, also analyzed the British decision to agree to Stalin's frontier demands as the only way to hold military discussions with the Soviets during the remainder of the war. This would also serve as an important foundation for Anglo-Soviet post-war collaboration.⁷⁷ At this point there seemed little doubt that the British, despite what the Americans thought, had decided to grant Stalin's wish.

On 25 March Eden, by arguing that a delay in the negotiations with the Russians would be dangerous, surmounted the only obstacle that remained in his way. Churchill, although distrustful of Stalin and the Soviets' true intentions, saw no other way to proceed but to give in to Soviet demands. Cadogan confirms that Churchill had been "brought round," and so any further opposition in the War Cabinet would concede. Cadogan also admitted that he might have been wrong before he warned that if he was not, the British would be "in a mess".

The following day, Cadogan noted that the Cabinet had agreed with Eden and sent a telegram to the President informing him of the Cabinet's decision to proceed. Cadogan believed this was a good idea and thought Roosevelt would strongly object.⁷⁸ As a result of this decision, Eden sent two separate telegrams that asked Halifax to speak with Roosevelt about the resolution. Eden, once again, highlighted the fact that post-war cooperation depended on an agreement being reached. He also argued that no frank discussions with the Russians could take place without settling the issue of their frontiers.⁷⁹ These arguments, which Eden had used since he returned from the Moscow meetings, must be taken for what they were, namely that Eden honestly believed that the

⁷⁷ Woodward, 193.

⁷⁸ Cadogan, 443-444.

⁷⁹ Miner, 221.

issue of the Soviet frontier was the only roadblock to a more open, beneficial relationship between Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

Cadogan, as usual, disagreed with Eden's analysis of the situation. In a memorandum dated 10 March 1942, Cadogan expressed his fear of the plan Eden endorsed, arguing that British recognition of the Soviet borders would not guarantee an improvement in Anglo-Soviet relations. Moreover, he felt almost confident in the fact that Stalin would not alter his policy towards the British even if the 1941 borders were not included in the treaty. He also reiterated his opinion that it would be inexpedient for the British to break ranks with the Americans over this issue; he believed that Eden was placing a much higher price on the friendship of an unpredictable Soviet Union than that of a proven ally like the United States.⁸⁰ Cadogan fumed that Eden did not treat the Americans with very much respect, which could have resulted in a very precarious situation for the British.

Fortunately, from Cadogan's point of view, Roosevelt agreed not to make a public case of his dissatisfaction with British intentions, Cadogan believed that such a public statement from the President would be extremely embarrassing to the British government. The only provision Roosevelt asked for in return for his silence was a right for people to emigrate from any territory taken over by the Russians. Churchill happily agreed with the President.⁸¹ Cadogan was still unwilling to depart from his support of the American perspective and warned that Eden was going to find the ground would give way under him. He also made a comment that proved how much he feared what might happen when Eden began negotiating with Molotov. He chastised Eden for selling out the Poles and

⁸⁰ Cadogan quoted in Miner, Between Churchill and Stalin, 214.

⁸¹ Miner, 222.

giving the rest of Europe the impression that the British would do the same if it was necessary for Russian friendship, and he ended the memorandum by once again commenting that Eden was aggravating the Americans for no good reason.⁸²

Cadogan, like Stalin and Molotov, believed Eden would be far weaker in the negotiations than he proved to be. It is important to remember that Eden thought he had Stalin's word from the Moscow meetings that the issue of the Soviet-Polish border would be left open until a later date. Stalin volunteered to send a special letter stating this to the British at the time the treaty would be signed.⁸³ In addition to this, Eden clearly states in his memoirs that "there was never any question that the frontier with Poland must be excepted from any recognition of Russian western boundaries."⁸⁴ Cadogan was not necessarily wrong about the Soviet attitude since Molotov did push for acceptance of the Soviet-Polish border at the London meetings, but he underestimated Eden's integrity and moral courage. Eden did not have any intention of relenting on the question of the Polish border, as far as he was concerned, it was agreed that it would be left open. This is a crucial point considering that most of the historians that have accused Eden of appeasing, or at least being "soft" on the Soviets, have reached these conclusions based on Cadogan's diaries. He believed there was an inherent risk in giving in to the Soviet demands and, more importantly, he thought Eden was blind to this. As a matter of fact, Eden's policy gradually became more resilient as the military situation improved for the Western Allies, which coincided with the deterioration of the military situation in the Soviet Union.

⁸² Cadogan, 446.

⁸³ The third meeting in Moscow, 18 December 1941, War and Diplomacy, 39.

⁸⁴ Eden, 370.

This is where the British, clearly led by Eden, stood when it came time to begin serious discussions with the Russians about the proposed treaties. These treaties included both British and Soviet proposed drafts of a military treaty and a second treaty dealing with post-war collaboration. As April ended, the British and Soviets exchanged their drafts of these treaties; these drafts would serve as the foundation from which the London meetings would proceed. Eden, who had steered a steady course towards a closer Anglo-Soviet relationship since his return from Moscow in late December, was about to embark on the toughest negotiations he would face as British Foreign Secretary.

Chapter III: Eden's Negotiations with Molotov

The London negotiations began inauspiciously on 8 April, when V. M. Molotov,⁸⁵ the Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Relations, rejected Eden's invitation to visit London. Eden was informed that Molotov was unable to leave the Soviet Union at that time and negotiations should proceed by way of Maisky, the Soviet Ambassador stationed in London. Eden was not pleased with the rejection. If the negotiations were going to receive the ardent discussion that he felt they deserved Molotov should be present. Nevertheless, Eden did push forward by submitting a British draft proposal for a treaty on 13 April.⁸⁶

The draft proposal that Eden submitted to the Soviets on 13 April included three clauses that made the Soviets uncomfortable. The first point of contention was a clause stating that Great Britain and the Soviet Union agreed to work with other countries involved to ensure a lasting peace in post-war Europe. The second dispute was Eden's inclusion of an article that focused on the Soviets border with Poland, he left the border question open and, based on the first contended clause, implied that Great Britain would be involved in the Russo-Polish negotiations.⁸⁷ The final problem was President

⁸⁵ Chuev, xiii-xix. Molotov was born into a well-off family in 1890. He was a distant relative of Alexander Scriabin, a famous composer. In 1921 he became secretary of the Central Committee and was elected a candidate member of the Politburo. In 1939 Stalin named him Commissar of Foreign Affairs although he had no formal training and a limited education. In the years 1939-1949 and 1953-1956 Molotov held his own against many world leaders in various negotiations. John Foster Dulles wrote: "I have seen in action all the great international statesmen of the century. I have never seen such personal diplomatic skill at so high a degree of perfection as Molotov's."

⁸⁶ Maisky, 261.

⁸⁷ Eden, 378.

Roosevelt's suggestion that after the war people in territories that have changed hands could emigrate along with their "moveable property". This would include the Soviet absorbed states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.⁸⁸

Eden felt that this proposal was extremely fair for a few different reasons. First, Eden had Stalin's word that the issue of the Russo-Polish border would be left open until the end of the war. Eden believed that the Soviets had already agreed to this clause at the December meetings in Moscow. Eden also explained to Maisky that the article on their two Governments working with other states in post-war Europe referred to the United States. Obviously any post-war settlement would have to include the United States, so Eden believed the Soviets would have no basis to reject this clause. Eden was, however, concerned by Roosevelt's clause, a clause that Churchill supported whole-heartedly, as did others in the war cabinet. Eden believed that Stalin would not accept any article in the treaty that portrayed the USSR as a nation bent on subjecting others to its will. Eden anticipated problems with the Soviets over this clause and tried to explain to Maisky that this clause would be necessary to placate American public opinion.⁸⁹

It was clear that Maisky did not have the authority to negotiate the treaty without step-by-step instructions from Stalin; therefore, there was little progress in the negotiations during April.⁹⁰ Maisky voiced Soviet objections to the wording of the British proposal then he, like Eden, waited for Stalin's counterproposal. Before the counterproposal arrived, Maisky received a message that Molotov had "unexpectedly" changed his mind and accepted Eden's invitation to London for the treaty negotiations.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Cited in Miner, 228.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁰ Eden, 379.

⁹¹ Maisky, 261.

Maisky's surprise that Molotov was coming to London demonstrated how important this treaty was to the Soviets. Stalin wanted Molotov in London because Stalin wanted an agreement with the British and Molotov was his shrewdest negotiator.

Eden spent the rest of April waiting for Molotov and defending himself and his position from others in the British Government. It is clear that certain people thought Eden was willing to sign a treaty with the Soviet Union at all cost. The lack of faith people such as Cadogan place in Eden indicates the great fear many in England had of the Soviet Union. Cadogan wrote on 9 April, before Eden had even submitted the British draft to Maisky, that he was "selling the Poles down the river".⁹² Eden and Stalin had agreed to keep the question of the Russo-Polish border open until the end of the war and Eden acted accordingly. He had set his boundaries and never wavered despite constant and strong criticism from his peers as well as the Soviets. On 17 April Eden sent a telegram to Lord Halifax stating:

We are not, as enemy propaganda has put out, selling Eastern Europe to Russia. The terms of the treaty show that her demands have been limited to safeguarding her frontiers. The interests of Poland and other Eastern European countries are safeguarded and Russia admits British interest in the post-war settlement in Eastern Europe.⁹³

Eden, however, understood the importance of a formal agreement with the Soviets that would provide framework for mutual assistance and safeguard against the danger of Russia signing a separate peace with Germany, and while Eden's colleagues had the luxury of questioning his every step, Eden knew it was his responsibility to bind the Soviets to a favorable agreement. At the same time, however, he had no intention of

⁹² Cadogan, 446.

⁹³ Eden quoted in Miner, 230.

alienating the United States by giving in to the Soviets on the issue of Poland's eastern frontier.

On 1 May Maisky received the Soviet counterproposal to Eden's draft. The counterproposal lacked any reference to Eden's article that the issue of the Russian frontier concerning Poland would be left open until the end of the war.⁹⁴ According to Maisky, Stalin believed this was a question that concerned the Soviet Union and Poland alone; therefore, there was no reason for the British to be involved in the negotiations whenever they took place.

The Soviet draft also included a stipulation that the Soviet Union would sign mutual assistance pacts with Finland and Rumania. This had not been mentioned before and clearly startled Maisky who wrote in his journal "this alternative (treaty) has no chance of being approved by the British."⁹⁵ This is an important point since Maisky was the Soviet representative in London; he was the person who was meeting with Eden to discuss the British proposal throughout April. Maisky knew, perhaps better than anyone, Eden had been straightforward in his negotiations with the Soviets and he wanted a mutually beneficial agreement, not a better deal for the British. In both the Moscow meetings and the April proposal Eden offered what he believed to be a fair deal to the Soviets and he was not about to blindly accommodate Stalin's desires.

Maisky seemed to understand how far Eden would be willing to go whereas Stalin seemed to draft a treaty that he believed to be fair. Looking back on it Maisky appeared to recognize the difficulty Molotov was about to have in London, and he felt strongly enough in his assessment to tell Molotov on the train ride from Dundee to London that

⁹⁴ Eden, 378-379.

⁹⁵ Maisky, 263.

the Soviet draft stood little chance of being accepted by the British. Ironically, Maisky understood Eden's position better than did Cadogan, who, like many conservatives, believed that anyone willing to work with the Soviets was "soft" on communism and thus incapable of standing up to them. Maisky, however, knew from his own experience with Eden that the British foreign minister was a realistic negotiator who understood that a treaty with the Soviets would only be effective if both sides stood to gain from it. Eden offered a reasonable quid pro quo and expected the Soviets to do the same.

The Soviet counterproposal was not warmly received in London. On 3 May Cadogan clearly outlines his perspective on the questions surrounding the treaty:

Pretty bad: they cut out all we had put in to save the Polish case and American susceptibilities. It's curious that A[nthony Eden], should have hopes of 'appeasement'!! Much better to say to the Russians 'We can't discuss post-war frontiers: we want to work with you, now and later: let's have a mutual guarantee. Frontiers can easily be agreed on later. But don't ask us *now*, at the cost of all our principles, to agree to a situation which *we* can't influence!' I believe, still, it would be better not to crawl to the Russians over the dead bodies of *all* our principles.⁹⁶

The Soviet reply was not what the British were expecting. Cadogan believed that the British would have to disregard their principles and accept the Soviet proposal if they were going to reach an agreement. Contrary to Maisky, Cadogan believed that Eden was willing to abandon his principles for the treaty. In Cadogan's journal entries for 4 and 5 May he reluctantly admits that Eden was firm in his position regarding Poland and was unwilling to placate the Soviet's newest demands.⁹⁷ Cadogan realized that Eden accepted the possibility of failure in the negotiations, a sign that Eden resolved not to reach an agreement at all cost, which Cadogan had feared two days earlier.

⁹⁶ Cadogan, 449.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 449-450.

Eden met with Maisky on 5 May to discuss the Soviet counterproposal and he did nothing to hide his obvious disappointment in certain aspects of Stalin's draft. He felt that the Soviets had completely ignored England's position regarding the Dominions, the United States, and their other allies such as Poland concerning the post-war settlement. Eden had stated numerous times in Moscow that he would not overlook British obligations to sign a treaty with the Soviets. Eden went on to inform Maisky that the British intended to be involved in the settlement of the Russo-Polish border. Eden knew that the British had gone to war over Poland and were not willing to allow Stalin to unilaterally impose his territorial demands on that country. Maisky's insistence that the pacts with Finland and Rumania must be ratified along with the treaty prompted Eden to note "it was despairing to try to negotiate with the Soviet Government when they invariably raised their price at every meeting."⁹⁸ This is where the negotiations remained until Molotov arrived in London on 20 May.

The first meeting took place on 21 May with Churchill, Eden, Attlee, Cadogan, Sargent [Deputy Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs], and Firebrace [British Military Attaché in the USSR] representing the British while Molotov, Maisky and V. N. Pavlov [Molotov's interpreter] represented the Soviet Union. After Churchill welcomed Molotov the latter explained what his objectives were for this trip to London as well as his trip to Washington immediately following. Molotov stated that he was authorized to discuss two issues with the British, the proposed treaty that had been discussed in Moscow and the possibility of the Western Allies opening a second front to take some military pressure off of the Soviet Union. Molotov did point out that it was exactly eleven months to the day that Hitlerite Germany had attacked the Soviet Union

⁹⁸ Eden, 379.

and they had felt the brunt of the *Wehrmacht* offensive since. Molotov went on to say that although the Soviets considered the question of a second front as primarily a political issue he did understand there were military aspects to be worked out therefore he had brought Major-General Isayev, Chief Directorate of the General Staff. Isayev was qualified and authorized to discuss the military aspects involved in opening a second front with the British and Americans.

In this first meeting Molotov provided explanations for the Soviet draft proposal. Molotov explained that Stalin's minimum provisions were necessary to placate Soviet public opinion based on Soviet sacrifices over the past eleven months in the war with Germany and Soviet security in the future. Molotov instructed Churchill, Eden, and Cadogan that the Soviets had limited themselves to the absolute minimum conditions agreeable to Stalin. According to Molotov no one in the Soviet Union would allow him to sign a treaty that did not contain these minimum conditions. The frontier of the Soviet Union must return to the point in which Hitler violated it and this was non-negotiable.

More specifically Molotov intoned that the Soviet proposal did not contradict the Atlantic Charter, he argued that any claim the former Governments of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia had to be involved in the post-war settlement were groundless. These three countries had agreed to become part of the Soviet Union through legal plebiscites thus they were now part of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Molotov said that the USSR was willing to work with Poland and wanted to improve Soviet-Polish relations. He hoped that the two governments could work around the difficulties of the past; nonetheless Stalin's minimum provisions must be met to ensure Soviet security.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Molotov's talks with Churchill, 21 May 1942. *War and Diplomacy*, 66-71.

Eden and Molotov began their negotiations on 21 May after Churchill and Molotov had their general introductory discussion. The meeting between Eden and Molotov was much more detailed and turned to the actual articles of the draft proposals. Both men agreed there were no differences in their proposals on a military alliance thus they began with the treaty on post-war organization.

The negotiations began with Eden making two suggestions in the wording of the first two articles of the proposal. His first change was to add the phrase “and with due consideration of other interested states” on to the end of the statement that the Soviet Union and Great Britain would act with mutual assistance in the post-war settlement of Europe. In the second article Eden asked to have the word “and” changed to “or” concerning other countries acting in accordance with Germany. Molotov accepted both of these alterations. He then questioned Eden on the wording of the third article of the British draft proposal, the article that dealt with the Soviet-Polish border.

Molotov began by saying that he believed Eden had agreed with Stalin in Moscow that the question of the Soviet-Polish frontier would be settled by a mutual agreement between the USSR and Poland. Molotov thought that Eden had also agreed to the Soviet Government sending a letter to him at the time the treaty was signed stating that this issue would be resolved by the “allied and friendly” states of the Soviet Union and Poland. Molotov insisted that the British did not need to be involved considering the Soviet Union had demonstrated its willingness to work with Poland in the agreement of 30 July 1941.¹⁰⁰ This agreement provided mutual assistance and support in the war with Germany and it also left the frontier question open. Molotov did not see what objection

¹⁰⁰ Molotov’s talk with Eden, 21 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 72-73.

Eden could have to this proposal since the Russo-Polish border question would remain open.

Eden reminded Molotov of the British-Polish agreement completed on 25 August 1939 in which Great Britain and Poland established their own pact of mutual assistance.¹⁰¹ In addition to this Eden cited an exchange of letters between Great Britain and Poland at the time of the Soviet-Polish Agreement; these letters affirmed Britain's earlier agreement with Poland. Eden informed Molotov that these concordats were still applicable thus Eden wanted that stated in Article 3. He was willing to exchange letters with the Soviet Government in this matter if Molotov preferred.¹⁰² Although Eden did not mention it he apprised the House of Commons on the evening of 30 July 1941 that Great Britain did not guarantee any frontiers in Eastern Europe. This was meant to be a public declaration that Great Britain would honor their agreements with Poland and provide what protection they could from any nation aggressively seeking territory at the expense of the smaller, weaker countries in Eastern Europe. The Soviet-Polish agreement of 30 July 1941 stated that the territorial changes made in the 1939 Soviet-German treaties as they pertained to Poland were "invalid."¹⁰³ Therefore the Soviet Government viewed Eden's declaration as a British rejection of the Soviet frontier as it existed before the German attack in 1941; accordingly Molotov would aggressively argue against any reference to British intervention in Article 3.

¹⁰¹ Rzheshesky, 161.

¹⁰² Molotov's talks with Eden, 21 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 73.

¹⁰³ Rzheshesky, 161.

Molotov's reaction was to state once again that the Soviets were ready to sign an agreement based on the Curzon Line¹⁰⁴ with minor land concessions benefiting the Soviets. If Eden found this unacceptable the Soviet Government would be willing to send the British a letter stating that the Soviet Union and Poland would resolve the Soviet-Polish border question. Eden debated that the Polish Government would be opposed to Molotov's suggestion in which case the British could not sign the treaty. Moreover, the British proposal was worded to avoid such opposition.

Molotov disagreed and defended his position that the Soviet Union frontier remained non-negotiable. He recommended that Poland could be compensated for her role in the war by acquiring land in East Prussia thus punishing German aggression in the process. Molotov also noted that the Soviets viewed the British proposal as a statement of unilateral support for Poland and against the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁵ Molotov believed Eden had two options; he could agree to the Curzon Line or agree to leave the question open for the Soviet Union and Poland to settle. Molotov also contended that as a concession the British should not reiterate their support for the Poles as they had on 30 July 1941.

Eden rebutted that the British could not renounce their support for the Poles considering they were bound by pledges made before the war began. Indeed, Eden went on to justify his argument by reiterating that the Poles expected the British Government to confirm its allegiance to them soon or would suspect the British of breaking its pledge.

¹⁰⁴ The Curzon Line was the eastern frontier of Poland proposed at the time of the Paris Peace Conference. Cited in Eden, *Reckoning*, 335.

¹⁰⁵ James Shotwell and Max Laserson, *Poland and Russia 1919-1945*, New York, 1945. 7, 18. "There is no question that the line ultimately...called the Curzon Line, was an honest effort to establish an ethnographic frontier between that part of Poland which has a decisive Polish majority and those parts later called Eastern Poland in which the White Russians and Ukrainians form a majority." From April 1920 "Poland was recognized widely beyond her ethnographic boundaries" and "until the autumn of 1939, the western part of White Russia and the western parts of the Ukraine...remained under the domination of Poland."

Eden sternly informed Molotov that the British did intend to publicly affirm their support of the Poles as they had on 30 July 1941.

Maisky interjected that the British-Polish Treaty of 1939 did not guarantee Poland's frontiers therefore the Soviet proposal did not violate any pledge the British had made to the Poles. Molotov bolstered Maisky's argument alluding to Stalin's public vow that the Soviets were fighting to restore the borders violated by Hitlerite aggression. How, Molotov asked, could the Soviets contradict this goal? The Soviet Union's claim was not an aggressive attempt to acquire land but a justified measure to regain security. Moreover, argued Molotov, the Soviets made a concession by agreeing to leave discussion of this frontier open, and now the British must match their concession. Molotov held that both sides must be willing to compromise for the negotiations to be successful therefore the British should not reiterate their statement of 30 July 1941 to the Poles. Molotov added that if the Soviet Union and Great Britain were able to compromise on an issue such as this, it might serve as a base to build better relations in the future.

Eden retorted that the British position could not be altered; he explained to Molotov that the British wanted to work with the Soviet Union but their hands were tied on this point by the pledges they had made to Poland. Eden strongly stated that he would not negotiate any matter that concerned Britain's treaty with Poland. Moreover, Eden reminded Molotov of the Moscow meetings, where he made a concession to the Soviets and accepted their frontier in the Baltic, at that time Stalin agreed that the question of the Soviet Union's border with Poland would remain open.

Molotov argued that the British must match the Soviet's compromise and Eden referred to Britain's compromise in the Baltic. Molotov debated that the Baltic States had been part of Russia for "hundreds of years" thus the British did not compromise anything. According to Molotov, the Soviet Government needed to restore its border with Poland to secure the Soviet Union's western frontier. Poland, as Stalin had suggested at the Moscow meetings, would be generously compensated at the expense of Germany and Molotov believed this would be acceptable to the Polish Government. Eden once again reverted to the Moscow meetings where Stalin and Molotov agreed to leave the question of the Soviet-Polish border open.

Eden continued to defend Britain's position of 30 July 1941 every time Molotov attempted to secure an answer to the border issue. Eden did not deviate from the British proposal on Article 3 and often referred to the Moscow meeting in which Stalin and Molotov agreed to leave this question open.¹⁰⁶ Eden believed and acted as though Article 3 had been decided in Moscow, thus he regarded Molotov's attempt to negotiate this issue as pointless. Eden proved in his first London meeting with Molotov that he would not sign a treaty at all cost. In fact, he stonewalled every effort Molotov made to compromise on Article 3. Eden remained true to his convictions and the Moscow meetings.

After this first meeting Eden noted in his memoirs that Molotov emphasized that the second front was more important to the Soviets than the treaty and Molotov was willing to leave the treaty unsigned if the British were unwilling to meet Stalin's minimum concessions. Eden chronicled the difficulties he had with Molotov over the Polish issue and his newest demand, the Soviet pacts with Finland and Rumania.

¹⁰⁶ Molotov's talks with Eden, 21 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 74-77.

Molotov believed to ensure Soviet safety from a future invasion the pact with Finland and Rumania must be included in some way at the same time the treaty was signed or no one in the Soviet Union would agree to the treaty.¹⁰⁷ In addition to the new demand, Eden and Cadogan were both disgruntled that the Soviets had ignored Britain's concession regarding the Baltic States.

In short, Molotov did not display an attitude Eden found conducive to successful negotiations. To begin with the British were dead set against the possibility of opening a second front in 1942. In fact, they were doubtful that they could open an effective second front in 1943. Furthermore, Eden had Stalin's word from the meetings in Moscow that the question of the Soviet-Polish frontier would be left open and the Soviets were completely disregarding his promise. Finally Molotov informed the British they must also recognize Soviet pacts with Finland and Rumania if Molotov was to sign the treaty. Cadogan noted Eden was not optimistic that an agreement would be reached. After meeting with Eden the next morning he wrote: "Don't think A.[nthon]y Eden] has got many illusions left."¹⁰⁸

Molotov's telegram to Stalin in the evening on 21 May recounts his meetings with Churchill and Eden. Molotov did not offer too much personal insight in this telegram; he waited until after the next round of meetings before he made any decisions about the British and the negotiations. He met with Eden in the morning and continued their arbitration of the political treaty. He met with Churchill in the afternoon and discussed the possibility of Great Britain and the United States opening a second front in 1942. To conclude, he met with both Eden and Churchill at which time Eden informed Molotov

¹⁰⁷ Eden, 380-381.

¹⁰⁸ Cadogan, 453.

that he wanted to submit a new draft treaty the next morning that emphasized mutual assistance. May 22 was pivotal in the negotiations; by the end of the day Molotov had determined the British did not want to compromise with the Soviets in order to reach an agreement. He firmly believed that the British were waiting to see what occurred on the Eastern Front rather than working to conclude a mutually beneficial treaty.

The morning meeting on the 22 of May started the same way the meeting of the previous night ended, debating the issue of Poland. Molotov changed his tactic and worked on a reply letter for Eden to send the Soviet Government at the time the treaty was signed. Molotov believed that Eden might accept an exchange of letters that described the Russo-Polish border rather than including it in the treaty. Molotov's major obstacle to this compromise was that once again Eden refused to eliminate British confirmation of their pledge made to the Poles in August 1939, Eden's reason being the letter of 30 July 1941 affirmed Britain's treaty with Poland signed in 1939 and that remained unchanged. Eden believed the Polish Government exiled in London doubted what Britain's intentions were regarding the Soviet Union therefore he held his position to confirm the letter of 30 July 1941. Eden challenged Molotov's assertion that this meant unilateral support for Poland and consequently contradicted Soviet aims. Eden contended that the British position did not stipulate the manner in which this question must be decided. Eden explained that this support did not oppose the Curzon Line or any other line, but simply stated that Britain's position concerning Poland had not changed.

Molotov resolved to attack the British concession, as he perceived it the Soviet border with Poland equaled 800 km whereas the Soviet frontier with the Baltic States constituted only 400 km. The Soviet concession was not only twice as much as the

British concession but the Soviet concession left a majority of their western border undecided putting the country in a precarious position. He insisted the Soviet proposal did not damage Poland; the proposal secured the Soviet Union at the expense of Germany not Poland, the Ukraine or Belorussia. Molotov expressed his belief that Poland had come between closer British-Soviet relations in 1939 and was doing so again in 1942, the dispute over Poland was the one divisive element that hindered British-Soviet negotiations.

Eden brought the lengthy discussion to an end and reaffirmed his position when he expressed his doubt for a successful conclusion to this matter. Molotov agreed and offered to move on to other articles. Like the day before, Molotov proved unable to gain any type of acceptable British concession to leave the question of the Soviet-Polish border open.

Eden began to discuss Article 4 of the British proposal that was to be included on behalf of Roosevelt. The proposal allowed minorities to migrate with their personal belongings from any territory that switched nationalities during the war. Eden believed this Article must be included in the treaty to ensure American acceptance. Molotov agreed this would be acceptable for a German population to flee East Prussia if the Polish took control of the area however he thought this might cause many unnecessary problems for the Soviet Union regarding Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Molotov argued that it presented the treaty as a dichotomy, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were part of the Soviet Union yet this clause would allow certain elements of the population to make outrageous claims against the Soviet Government. Moreover, the enemies of the Allied Powers could use the malcontents as propaganda in their fight against the three powers.

Despite the Americans disdain for the treaty the Soviet Government could not accept Article 4 as proposed by the British.

Molotov then turned his attention to the Soviet protocol that concerned Britain signing mutual assistance pacts with Belgium and Holland while the Soviet Union signed the same pacts with Finland and Romania. Molotov believed that making pacts with Belgium, Holland, Finland, and Romania would preclude the countries from allying themselves with Germany in the future against the USSR and Great Britain. Molotov argued that pacts would allow these countries to maintain their independence and security while providing Britain and the Soviet Union with an extra-measure of security. Eden commented that Great Britain did not intend to sign mutual assistance treaties with Belgium or the Netherlands therefore he did not see any reason for this protocol to be included in the treaty. Furthermore, he failed to understand what this had to do with Great Britain, as far as he was concerned this was a matter between the Soviet Union and Finland and Romania. Eden needed to see a draft of the protocol before he could determine whether it had any relevance to Britain but his initial thought was that it did not.

Molotov claimed that the protocol would reinstate the Soviet peace treaty with Finland signed 12 March 1940 and the Soviet-Romanian agreement of 27/28 June 1940. He continued by saying that whether Britain wanted mutual assistance treaties with Belgium and Holland was her business but Belgium and Holland were the countries the Germans used against Britain and these countries were susceptible to future German aggression perhaps to the detriment of England. Eden again stated that he would need to see the protocol in written form that night so he could determine whether or not this

protocol was relevant to Britain or the treaty. Molotov agreed to submit a written draft of the protocol that evening thus ending his second meeting with Eden.¹⁰⁹

Eden wisely put off Molotov and the secret protocol for the essence of the protocol gave the Soviet Union permission to enter Finland or Romania any time they perceived a threat to their security. Finland and Romania would maintain a very precarious independence under such a protocol and Eden clearly understood this. Eden was also correct in recognizing that this protocol had nothing to do with Great Britain, if the British added such a protocol to the treaty it would only serve as a license the Soviet Union could point to every time it entered Finland or Romania in the future.

Molotov's meeting with Churchill and Eden in the afternoon of 22 May 1942 revealed the main reason Molotov agreed to meet with the British in London before he flew to the United States to meet with Roosevelt. Molotov opened by announcing that in April Roosevelt had asked Molotov to fly to Washington to discuss the possibility of opening a second front in Western Europe in 1942. Molotov wanted to know what the opinion of the British was in this matter. He added that while the supplies the British and Americans had been providing were extremely helpful to the Soviet cause, he specifically wanted to know if their Western Allies, especially Britain, could draw forty German divisions off of the Eastern Front in the summer and autumn of 1942.

Churchill answered Molotov as honestly as he could at this time. He stated that the British faced certain problems that needed to be kept in mind when planning a cross-channel invasion. In the past Britain's naval superiority would be enough to land troops on the European continent, however, the importance of air superiority had changed that. If Britain attempted to land troops without securing and maintaining air superiority it

¹⁰⁹ Molotov's talks with Eden, 22 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 81-85.

would be a complete failure. The Germans would be able to move troops to any spot quickly with their planes as well as having many easy targets to bomb as the British ships moved towards the shoreline of the European continent. Troops that did make the shore would be isolated with no guarantee of receiving supplies because once again the British Navy would be sitting ducks for the *Luftwaffe*. Churchill did believe, however, that the British were battling half the German fighter strength and one-third of the German bomber strength at this time. Churchill explained that if the British air raids over the European continent achieved the success he believed they would, the Germans would need to transfer some of their Air Force from the Eastern Front to protect the European continent or watch their Air Force be destroyed on the Western Front.

Churchill advised Molotov this was the best the British could do at the present time. He did not think even a successful landing on the continent would draw off a significant number of German troops. More to the point, Churchill stated that the British and Americans had no chance of being prepared for a landing in 1942, the Americans did not have the military forces and the British did not have the landing craft. Churchill informed Molotov that the British would have only 383 landing craft by 1 August and 566 by 1 September. On the other hand, the British would have enough landing craft in 1943 to land in Europe at five or six points simultaneously therefore greatly increasing the Allies chances of success. The Americans would also have been in the war for over a year by 1943 and would have had sufficient time to build their military forces for an invasion of Europe. He did not believe the Americans could take an active part in a 1942 cross-channel invasion, however, in 1943 the British and Americans would have between one and one-and-a-half million troops and an ample amount of landing facilities to justify

a Western European invasion. Churchill concluded that the British occupied forty four German divisions in Europe and Africa and would continue to do what they could to help the Soviet Union in 1942, but a successful invasion of Europe was not possible and he believed Roosevelt shared his opinion on the matter.

Molotov concluded this meeting by suggesting that the Generals meet to discuss this matter further. Despite Churchill's grim outlook for the possibility of attempting a military operation in 1942 he agreed that a meeting should be arranged.¹¹⁰

The final meeting of the day took place at Chequers around ten o'clock. Most of the meeting consisted of Churchill detailing the military situation as it pertained to Great Britain. Eden followed him, revealing that he had a new draft treaty he wished to introduce the next morning. This new draft was one treaty, not two, and eliminated all controversial points in favor of a mutual assistance pact for the current situation and after the war. This was based on the Soviet Union and Great Britain providing mutual assistance to one another for a period of up to twenty years. Eden believed this new draft would help both sides to get beyond the insurmountable difficulties they were experiencing with the two draft treaties they had been negotiating.

Molotov told Eden he thought it would be more expedient if they did not start a new treaty but completed negotiations on the treaties they had worked on since the Moscow meeting in December. Eden, disappointed with Molotov's answer, told the Soviet representative that the British could see no agreement being reached on the original draft treaties therefore if an agreement was reached it would have to be

¹¹⁰ Molotov's meeting with Churchill, 22 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 91-96.

postponed until Molotov returned from America. This effectively ended the discussion on treaties for the night.¹¹¹

In late April U.S. Ambassador Winant traveled to Washington and twice, 21 and 27 April, met with Secretary of State Hull who stressed American opposition to any Anglo-Soviet agreement that included territorial clauses; this information had certainly been relayed to Eden prior to his meetings with Molotov. Winant again made the American position clear to Eden after the first London meeting in which Molotov pressed the territorial issues. In fact, this time Winant read to Eden directly from a telegram drafted by Hull that was so strongly worded he feared Roosevelt would not approve. To his surprise the President did approve the cable which stated that the Americans would have no choice, but to publicly denounce an agreement that included specific territorial boundaries because to accept in silence would be to insinuate compliance and the U.S. refused to do this.¹¹² To this point, Roosevelt, Hull, and Winant had nothing to worry about; throughout these negotiations Eden remained focused on Britain's objectives and consistently stonewalled Molotov at every single attempt to force territorial concessions on the British.

Eden knew that the Americans did not want Great Britain to sign this treaty with the Soviets consequently he risked nothing by leaving the treaty unsigned. Conversely the Soviet Union did not want to face another German offensive without some kind of agreement with its western Allies. It must have been obvious to Molotov that the British were not bending over backwards to accommodate Soviet requests, especially concerning a second front. The risk Molotov had to contemplate was that he had no idea what the

¹¹¹ Molotov's talks with Churchill and Eden, 22 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 96-101.

¹¹² Hull, 1171-1173.

Americans would offer or what they were in a position to offer, as Churchill pointed out the Americans had been involved in the war for less than six months and concentrated in the Far East. At this point however Molotov did not realize how much the Soviet Union's bargaining position had diminished since he left Moscow. On the other hand, Eden's bargaining position had become unassailable; the Soviets would sign the draft treaty he wanted them to sign or nothing at all. Eden was prepared to see how badly the Soviets needed an agreement.

In the telegrams Molotov sent to Stalin on 23 May he gave a brief synopsis of his meetings with Churchill and Eden. The first telegram ended with Molotov expressing his obvious disappointment in the proceedings to that point, "on the whole, the British do not seem to want to meet us half-way."¹¹³ Molotov did not believe the British sympathized with the Soviet's needs or struggles. He feared the British did not want to risk any damage to their relationship with the United States therefore they were content on negotiating a deal on their own terms thus leaving the Soviets to face another German offensive alone. In a second telegram sent to Stalin on the same day Molotov outlined some conclusions that he had gathered from the meetings to that point. Molotov noted that the British seemed willing to wait for news from the Eastern Front therefore Molotov saw no reason to return to London after his trip to Washington since he knew the British point of view would not change. He also believed there was little hope of gaining anything new in his trip to the United States but it was too late for him to cancel. Molotov's basic conclusion was that the British were unwilling to negotiate with the

¹¹³ Molotov to Stalin., 23 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 102.

Soviets consequently Molotov could not sign an agreement based on Stalin's minimum conditions.¹¹⁴

Stalin's reply to Molotov outlined the way that Molotov should proceed, he instructed Molotov to focus his effort toward securing an agreement for a second front as soon as possible. Although Molotov had no way of knowing it the military situation the Red Army was faced with dictated this action.

Stalin also directed Molotov not to submit the protocol on the protective pacts the Soviets wished to sign with Finland and Romania. This protocol was clearly something the British had no need for and were not going to acknowledge in any agreement they signed with the Soviets. One of the first statements made by Molotov in London was that this protocol was a prerequisite for the Soviets to sign the treaty, Stalin's attempt to retract this statement was a step back. Stalin was no longer directing Molotov to get the best deal he could, at this point he was instructing Molotov to get a deal done.

Furthermore, contrary to Molotov's recommendation, Stalin did instruct him to return to London after his trip to the United States.¹¹⁵ Stalin concluded with a message to Churchill thanking him for the supply ships that were on their way to the USSR at the time.

This telegram from Stalin conveys a much different attitude than he presented at the Moscow meetings. Rather than pounding his chest and demanding minimum conditions on the British, Stalin was working to get an agreement with the British. Stalin needed a second front as soon as possible and he understood the British were not in a similar position, in fact the British could very easily sit back and watch as the Red Army

¹¹⁴ Molotov to Stalin, 23 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 104.

¹¹⁵ Stalin to Molotov, 23 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 106.

defended its homeland against the *Wehrmacht* onslaught. Although the British military had been disappointing to this point, they were not facing another German offensive on their own land risking massive destruction as the Soviets were. The British certainly did not want to see the Soviet Union destroyed by the Germans, however, the British were not going to appease the insatiable Soviet hunger at all cost as many believed. The Soviets were going to have to abandon their minimum conditions if an agreement was to be reached. Eden negotiated as shrewdly as he could, and did not stray from the line he drew in the sand at the very first meeting.

On 23 May Eden submitted the new draft treaty for Molotov to review. Although Molotov looked the treaty over and asked some questions concerning the differences between the new treaty and the two treaties they had been discussing, Molotov gave the new treaty a very cold reception. He flatly stated that the Soviet Government must review the new treaty and since it was impossible to do so by way of telegram, the new treaty could not be agreed on until after Molotov had returned to Moscow. Molotov decided it was in the best interest of Great Britain and the Soviet Union to continue their discussion of the original draft treaties.

The discussion Eden and Molotov engaged in was more of the same as it had been in previous meetings. Molotov had not received Stalin's telegram yet and so he began pushing Eden to accept the protocol that involved Soviet security in relation to Finland and Romania. Eden refused; once again he denied any reason for the British to be part of this protocol. Moreover, Eden informed Molotov that the British had no desire to be involved in any secret protocol, as the British Government did not engage in secret

diplomacy. Eden concluded in his usual fashion when he stated that he must refer this issue to the Cabinet for further discussion.

Molotov then shifted the focus of the talks to Article 4 of the British draft treaty. This article stated that any people living on land that changed hands during the war had the right to emigrate with their moveable property. Molotov remarked that this article portrayed the Soviet Government in an unfavorable light. Specifically Molotov believed this article made it look as if the Soviets wanted to restrict free emigration and the propaganda that resulted from such an article had the potential to be very dangerous to the Soviet Government. Eden replied that he and Churchill had both explained to Molotov that this was added at Roosevelt's request. In addition to Roosevelt's insistence, the British also found it necessary to include this article if there was to be any reference to the revision of frontiers. Eden allowed Molotov the right to find a suitable amendment to the wording of Article 4 but he did not see any way to eliminate the article unless the Soviets were willing to sign a treaty that did not mention frontiers. Finally, Eden thanked Molotov for his visit to London and expressed the British Government's hope that Molotov might return to London following his trip to Washington.¹¹⁶

Eden was in complete control of this meeting and must have frustrated Molotov tremendously. Eden used humor, laughing quite often as he replied to Molotov's arguments. At one point he even cautioned Molotov that he was acting like more of a royalist than the King himself. Eden was relaxed, patient, and firm in his replies and arguments. He allowed Molotov every courtesy then simply refused to give an inch. His control was complete; he essentially told Molotov that the negotiations were over when he thanked him for his visit. Once Eden introduced the new draft treaty he recognized

¹¹⁶ Molotov's talks with Eden, 23 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 107-114.

the onus was Molotov's. Eden gave Molotov options that were lose-lose for the Soviets; the British would disregard Article 4 if the Soviets agreed to a treaty that did not mention frontiers. Eden held all the cards and he, not Molotov, dictated how and when they would be played.

On the 23 May Molotov sent the new draft treaty and his analysis of the content to Stalin. Molotov believed that Eden was unprepared for the amendments he had presented therefore he offered the "emasculated" new draft treaty as a cover to conceal his desire to sabotage negotiations on the original drafts. After sending the new draft treaty to Stalin Molotov recommended it be disregarded as an "empty declaration" which the Soviet Union does not need.¹¹⁷ Perhaps it was Molotov's exasperation with the proceedings or his instructions as to the minimum concession he could accept but Molotov was working hard to dissuade Stalin from continuing the negotiations and every reply he received was one of conciliation. It must have baffled him as much as Cadogan who wrote that Molotov seemed "curiously anxious" to complete the negotiations before he went to the United States.¹¹⁸

Stalin's reply to Molotov was indeed one of conciliation. After informing Molotov that he believed the new treaty was an important document rather than an "empty declaration" he instructed Molotov to disregard the original drafts and proceed with negotiations on this new treaty. He explained his sudden abandonment of minimal concessions as an opportunity, writing that it gave the Soviets a free hand to guarantee the security of its frontiers by force. At the conclusion of his communiqué Stalin directed Molotov to reach an agreement as soon as possible and go to America.

¹¹⁷ Molotov to Stalin, 24 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 119-121.

¹¹⁸ Cadogan, 454.

These were not the instructions of a man who was still in control of the situation the way he was at the Moscow meetings. Stalin was no longer demanding anything, he was anxious; he wanted to get to Washington where he believed there was still a possibility of getting a second front opened in 1942. Stalin was also gracious to the British; he thanked Churchill for the supplies the British were sending. He agreed to abandon the treaties he drafted based on the Moscow meetings and, to Molotov's great disbelief, he conceded that Eden's new treaty was agreeable.¹¹⁹

Molotov had not received Stalin's telegram concerning Eden's alternative draft treaty before his meeting with Eden on 24 May thus their meeting once again centered on the old issues. Molotov, per Stalin's earlier telegram, generously backed off on his former position concerning the Polish question. In fact, Cadogan wrote that "unfortunately they had come a long way on the Polish frontier question, and it will be difficult to break on that."¹²⁰ Cadogan and the rest of the British certainly did not expect the concessions Molotov offered. Eden claimed that during the meeting Maisky drew him off to the side and said, "I cannot understand your attitude. We have made many concessions, yet you seem as though you do not want agreement."¹²¹ Maisky said what Molotov had to have thought; no matter how much Molotov offered Eden dodged his attempts to reach an agreement. He either claimed that he needed to refer the issue to the Cabinet or that he did not understand what Molotov meant and would need a clearer explanation. In the midst of Eden's constant rebuttals he pushed Molotov to accept his new treaty. While Eden optimistically wrote that Molotov was less "unreceptive" to the treaty, Cadogan probably assessed the situation more correctly when he wrote that they

¹¹⁹ Stalin to Molotov, 24 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 122-123.

¹²⁰ Cadogan, 454.

¹²¹ Eden, 381.

would not even look at the new draft. Eden used every excuse he could to find fault with the Soviets concessions but it had become obvious to those who attended the meetings that the Soviets in good faith had done all they could to secure an agreement and Eden was simply putting them off. Eden was no longer going to accept anything less than the new draft treaty the British had submitted.

That night Molotov was afforded the opportunity to gain the American perspective first hand when he met with Ambassador Winant at the Russian Embassy in London. If Molotov expected sympathy he was disappointed when Winant reinforced what Eden had hammered home; the Americans were opposed to an Anglo-Soviet treaty that mentioned frontiers at this point in the war. Winant did, however, give Molotov a reason for hope when he mentioned that the Americans were interested in discussing a second front.¹²² This must have been somewhat encouraging for Molotov, since coming to London he had been stonewalled in his talks with Eden regarding the treaty and his conversations with Churchill concerning a second front had gone no better. By wrapping up the treaty talks quickly Molotov may be able to salvage a second front in Washington.

Molotov began the talks on 25 May by informing Eden that the Soviets were ready to proceed using the new draft treaty. Molotov explained that he had informed Stalin that Churchill and Eden preferred this treaty to the original drafts. He also understood that President Roosevelt and U.S. public opinion disliked the drafts that contained references to frontiers. Molotov stated that he had spoken to U.S. Ambassador Winant and he supported Eden and Churchill's claim that the United States also favored the new draft. Molotov continued that he had not received final instructions from

¹²² Hull, 1173.

Moscow however he believed that he would receive those before the day had ended and saw no reason why they should not be able to quickly reach an agreement.¹²³

Eden and Molotov discussed minor points of contention in the wording of the new draft without coming across any major diatribes. The text of the Treaty was largely agreeable to both sides ergo the only thing to do was to await Stalin's final word from Moscow.

On the night of 25 May Molotov and Maisky met at 10 Downing Street with Churchill and Eden. This meeting was mainly an opportunity for Churchill to discuss British, Soviet, and American military production. Once Churchill had finished Eden offered Molotov the draft of the treaty including the minor amendments in wording that had been discussed that afternoon. The telegram Stalin sent on the 25 May did not introduce any new amendments hence it was decided to sign the treaty at five o'clock the next day.¹²⁴ The treaty that had caused so much controversy had been concluded with no bickering and much fanfare in London on May 26, 1942. It contained no mention of frontiers and everyone involved praised Eden's hard-fought triumph.¹²⁵

¹²³ Meeting in London, 25 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 140.

¹²⁴ Stalin to Molotov, 25 May 1942, War and Diplomacy, 149.

¹²⁵ Cadogan, 455.

Chapter IV

Why Did Stalin Accept the Treaty?

Why did the Soviets accept this treaty when they had been so adamant in only signing a treaty that would secure their frontier? Eden wrote in his Memoirs that:

The chief purpose in the Soviet Governments negotiation was to secure a second front in Europe as soon as possible. At some stage in our talks Molotov probably became convinced that he could not get his way over frontiers and decided that more was to be gained in the military field by accepting our new terms, and going to Washington with the Treaty signed, than by failure to agree.¹²⁶

Eden's analysis of the situation is partially correct. The Soviets most important goal at this point was to get a second front opened in Europe that could draw off forty German divisions as soon as possible. Molotov's telegrams to Stalin certainly did not give Stalin any reason to believe that the British were going to agree to the treaty that the Soviets wanted to sign. The only option that the Soviets had, if the treaty was to be signed, was to abandon their "minimum conditions".

Why were the Soviets willing to abandon their "minimum conditions" and sign the treaty? Churchill did not give Molotov any hope that the British were going to open a second front in Europe in 1942. On the contrary, Churchill believed the British and Americans could not open a second front that would be successful until 1943 at the earliest. In fact they did not attempt the large-scale Western European landing until June 1944. Why did Stalin risk abandoning his principals at this point when there was no realistic return in the near future?

¹²⁶ Eden, 382.

At the time the treaty was signed, the fact remained that the Soviet military was greatly struggling against their German counterparts. Their spring counter-offensives had overextended them and they were facing the German summer offensive. The Soviets made several military blunders that contributed to the precarious situation they found themselves in in late May 1942.

First of all, due to “Operation Kremlin,” the Soviets were led to believe that the main thrust of the German offensive that summer would be directed towards Moscow when in fact the *Wehrmacht* focused on the Caucasus. The Red Army therefore left the major part of its reserves in the Moscow region protecting a target that was never threatened. Furthermore Stalin, against the advice of General Zhukov and other military leaders, planned several localized spring offensives to throw off the timing of the anticipated large German summer offensive.¹²⁷

It was decided in mid-March 1942 that the Red Army would use a single push by the Southwestern and Southern Fronts to encircle the German Army in a pincer movement near Khar’kov. After encircling the Germans, the two Soviet Army Groups would drive westward toward the Dnepr River. Simultaneously, although completely disconnected from this offensive, the Briansk Front would prepare a localized offensive north of this Operation.

In addition to these offensives designed to help protect Moscow, Stalin decided to launch an attack against the German forces in the Crimea from the Kerch Peninsula in an attempt to alleviate pressure at the Soviet garrison in Sevastopol. At this time the Soviets were also able to keep the Murmansk railroad, a crucial lifeline that transported Allied supplies to the rest of the Eastern Front, open by way of two local counterattacks.

¹²⁷ David Glantz and Jonathon House, When Titans Clashed (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995), 105-106.

The German Plan, “Operation Kremlin,” was implemented in early 1942 when their intelligence sources noticed a build-up of Soviet troops in the region southeast of Khar’kov. “Operation Kremlin” was designed to force the Red Army to focus its attention on defending Moscow while the German objective was actually the oil-rich Caucasus region. Although the Germans underestimated the size of the Red Army’s spring counteroffensive around Khar’kov they did correctly predict it would begin in early May, after the spring thaw. Based on this information the Germans planned to absorb the Soviet offensive then initiate their own “Operation *Blau*,” a summer offensive designed to capture the Caucasus. In April 1942 the Germans also planned several small, localized operations intended to unite certain portions of the front before the spring thaw in preparation for the summer offensive.

The largest of these German operations was launched in response to a Soviet operation designed to clear the Kerch Peninsula. The Soviet operation began 27 February but was abandoned in early April when it became obvious that it had no chance of succeeding. On 8 May Field Marshal Erich von Manstein retaliated pushing the Red Army forces off of the Kerch Peninsula and back to the sea. By 19 May the German attackers had destroyed the Soviet 44th, 47th, and 51st Armies, the considerable loss on the Kerch Peninsula combined with the losses sustained at the Second Battle of Khar’kov were devastating.

The Soviets launched their offensive on Khar’kov on 12 May 1942. The Germans were very prepared defensively and destroyed nearly all of the Red Army units involved with a counteroffensive before they kicked off their own “Operation *Blau*.” In addition to German preparations, Soviet intelligence greatly misjudged the size and mobility of

German forces in the area. The Soviets were convinced that the major German operation was aimed at Moscow therefore they did not expect nor detect the German build-up of troops in the area. The Soviets completely miscalculated the strength and ability of the German defenses, which negated the German underestimation of the Soviet offensive.

The Soviets offensive was unable to delay “Operation *Fredericus*” which was scheduled to begin on 18 May as a two-pronged attack designed to alleviate a bulge that consisted of the Soviet 6th Army and Army Group Bobkin. It was this bulge at the Iziun bridgehead that appeared to both the Germans and the Soviets to make Khar’kov susceptible to encirclement. In fact, Field Marshal von Bock [German Commander-in-Chief Army Group South, Eastern Front] persuaded Hitler to launch “Operation *Fredericus*” a day early in an attempt to take pressure off Khar’kov. This decision resulted in the total encirclement and destruction of the Soviet 6th Army, Army Group Bobkin, and the 9th and 57th Armies from the Southern Front. General Timoshenko [a Marshal of the Soviet Union] and consequently Stalin did not even recognize the pincers were closing in around them until 20 May. The Soviets were completely encircled by the 22 May, losing what amounted to three rifle armies and a tank army. Combined with the three armies lost on the Kerch Peninsula three days before, the Soviet outlook for the summer of 1942 was disconcerting at best, if not completely disastrous.¹²⁸

Why did Stalin accept this “emasculated” treaty? He had no choice. Although Eden had no way of knowing how desperate the Soviet situation was after 22 May 1942, he maintained his hard-line attitude in respect to Stalin’s “minimum conditions” and thus was able to deliver a treaty that made the British very proud. When it looked like no agreement would be reached it was Stalin not Eden who acquiesced. Eden was able to

¹²⁸ Ibid, 110-116.

forgo the mention of frontiers in the treaty while reaching an agreement for mutual assistance. On the other hand, Stalin's surprising acquiescence still did not prompt the British and Americans to open a second front in Europe until June 1944. There is no doubt that Eden's negotiating methods delivered the British the treaty they wanted. Molotov's reaction to the new draft treaty and consequently Stalin's acceptance of it demonstrates the dire situation the Soviet Union was faced with in May 1942. Furthermore, the results of this treaty had no bearing on the frontiers of the Soviet Union after World War II and that was exactly what Churchill and Roosevelt wanted. As Molotov later said "everything hinged on their recognizing the Baltic States as ours. They refused to agree. We had to give in, to leave the question open."¹²⁹

Despite constant criticism from all sides, Anthony Eden negotiated the best possible treaty he could have at that time. Churchill said of the treaty "this was a great relief to me, and a far better solution than I had dared hope."¹³⁰ Roosevelt, Cadogan, and the leaders of smaller countries like Poland and Turkey were just as pleased with the results. Cadogan even included a paragraph in his published diaries that explained how he felt about Eden as Secretary of State that applies to these negotiations as much as anything Eden did: "I see that sometimes I wrote rather sharply about Anthony. I don't think any Secretary of State I served excelled him in finesse, or as a negotiator or in knowledge of foreign affairs."¹³¹ Eden exhibited each of these attributes in successfully signing the "Treaty Between the USSR and the United Kingdom of Great Britain on Alliance in the War Against Hitlerite Germany and Her Allies in Europe and on Collaboration and Mutual Assistance after the War."

¹²⁹ Chuev, 48-49.

¹³⁰ Churchill, Hinge of Fate, 336.

¹³¹¹³¹ Cadogan, Diaries, 345.

Any failures the British and Americans experienced in protecting Eastern Europe were failures that occurred later in the war. Miner's comparison of this treaty to the appeasement of Hitler at Munich fails to recognize major differences between the two. First of all, Hitler did not have to fire a shot to have his demands met at Munich, whereas Stalin was only able to get his western border secured after the loss of millions of Soviet lives. Secondly, both the British and the Soviets approved of the treaty that was signed in London. Moreover, as Kitchen argued, both sides continued to harbor suspicions throughout the war. If any potential opportunities for closer Anglo-Soviet relations had been missed, both parties shared the blame. Finally, if the British appeased Stalin it resulted from their much weaker position in relation to the Soviets in 1944 and 1945, not because Eden took a soft line with the Soviets in May 1942.¹³² In May of 1942 Eden accomplished the goal set for him by the British and the Americans; he successfully upheld the principles of the Atlantic Charter while signing a treaty of mutual assistance with the Soviet Union.

¹³² Kitchen, British Policy, 270-274.

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